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This book on Negro literature for the high school classroom briefly traces the history of Negro writers from pre-Civil War days to the present and contains listings of (1) anthologies of Negro literature, (2) works written by white writers about Negroes, (3) novels written specifically for high school students, and (4) biographies of historical and contemporary figures. Each work is annotated. The annotations include a summary of the contents, an evaluation of literary quality, and an estimate of reading level. Ways of using Negro literature in thematic units and in American literature survey courses are suggested, together with a Detroit Public Schools ninth-grade unit on Negro literature and a list of books appropriate to school libraries. (JS)

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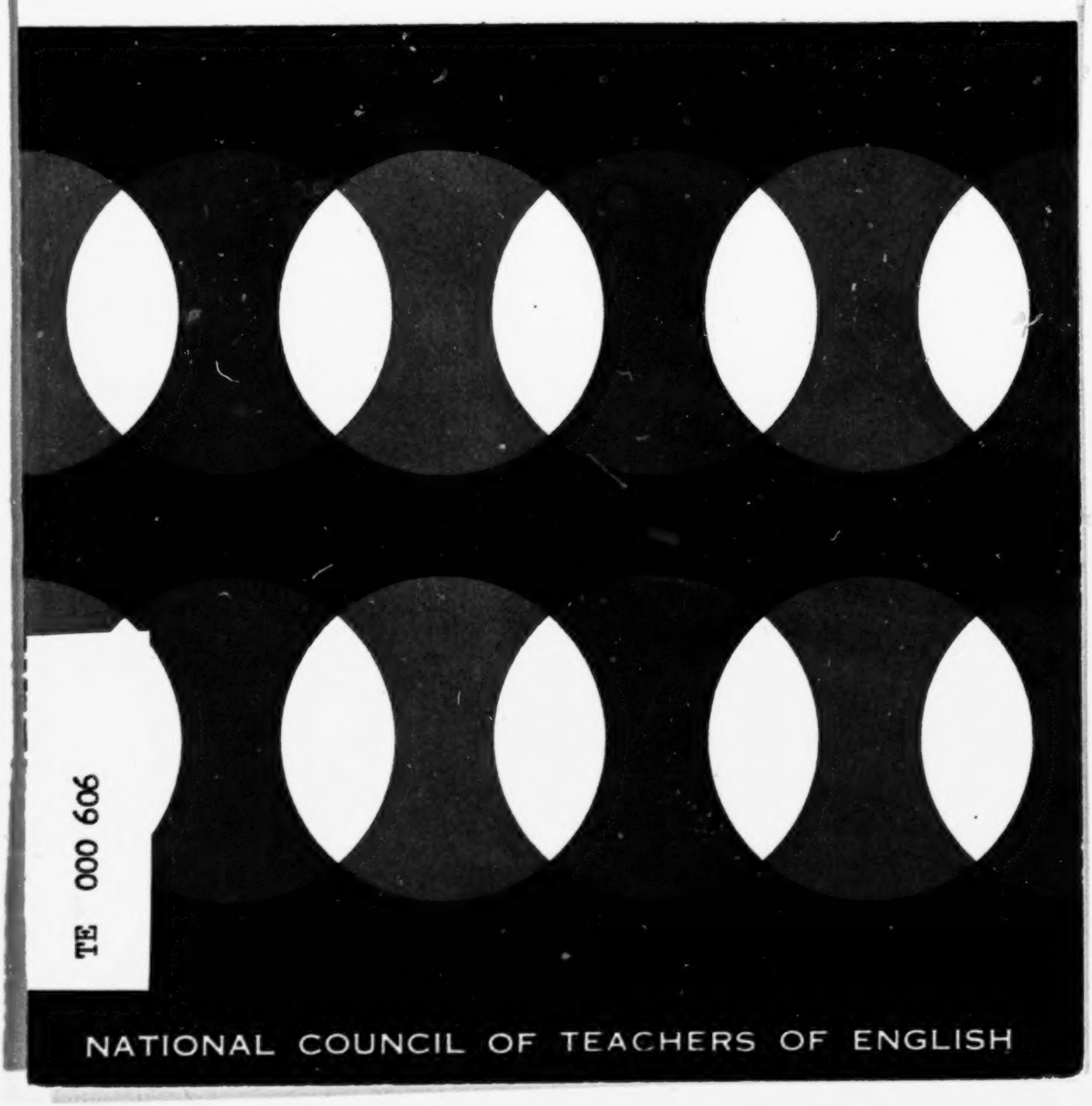
BARBARA DODDS



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NATIONAL COUNCIL OF TEACHERS OF ENGLISH

NEGRO LITERATURE

FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

BARBARA DODDS
VASHON HIGH SCHOOL
ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
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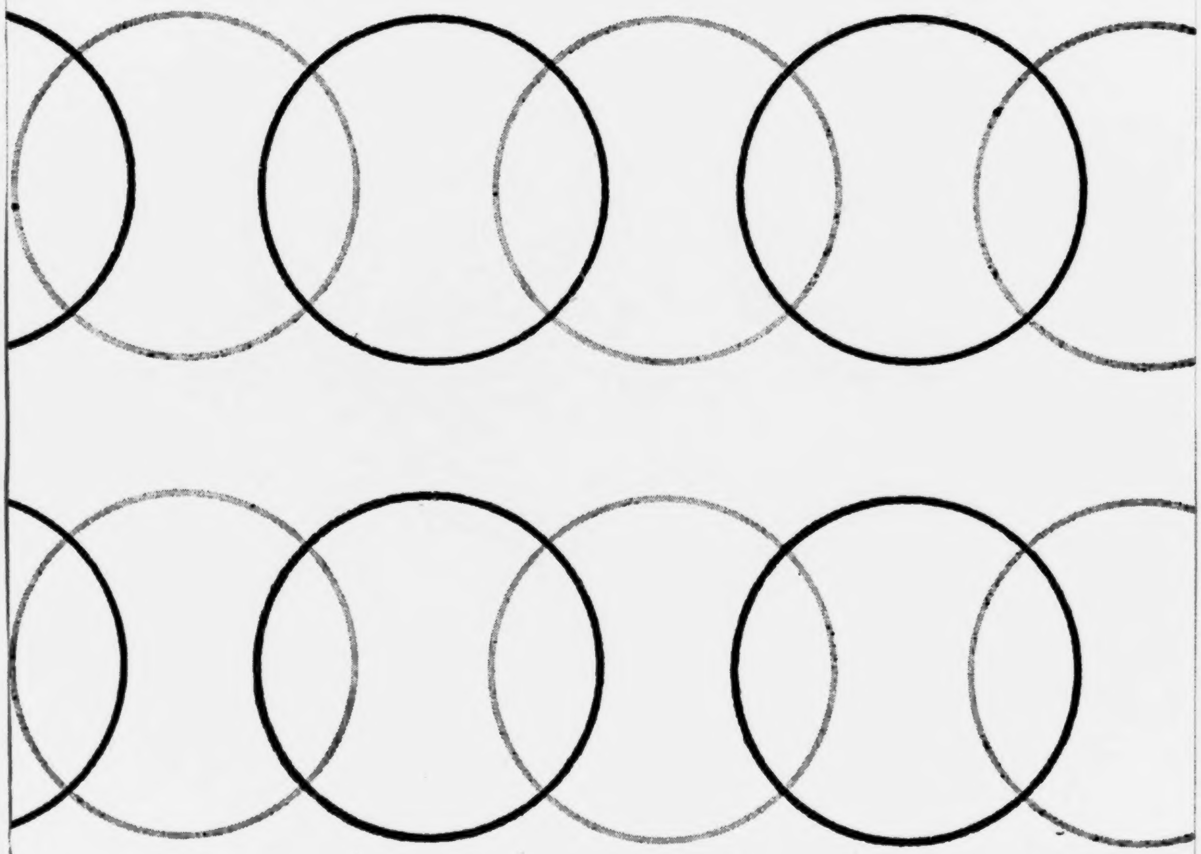

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FOREWORD

My father likes to tell about the balloon man in Chicago's Grant Park who was not doing much business on a Sunday morning when one of his red balloons slipped from his grasp and, helium filled, shot up above the crowd and danced in the breeze. Strollers were amused by it and, attracted to the balloon man, began to buy a number of his balloons. In a little while, when the interest passed, he purposely released a yellow balloon, which had the same results, attracting the casual walkers and causing them to buy balloons. A Negro boy had watched this whole scene and finally screwed up enough courage to ask the man, "Mister, would the same thing happen if you sent up a brown balloon?" The man answered with a smile, "Of course, Sonny. You see, it's what's inside that counts."

What is inside of a writer counts, whether he is lame like Byron, or obese like Amy Lowell, or black skinned like James Baldwin. The literature he produces must stand on its own merits, everyone reasons. But it should be equally reasonable that that literature must have some place to stand. Literature by Negroes through the past two hundred years has found a publisher only rarely, and in the past score of years has found, once published, a person even rarer to promote it in the market place. This has led quite naturally to textbooks in our schools that are notable for their absence of Negro writers and Negro themes.

Absence of a segment of society in a sense falsifies literature, for a major merit of literature is that it broadens and deepens experience. Furthermore, a great literature is relevant to people and to society as they are, and American literature surely is not relevant if it ignores over 10 percent of the Americans.

Ignoring creative Negroes has been done so thoroughly for so long that even educated men and women have been known to say, "But Negroes haven't written anything, have they?" or "They haven't written anything good, have they?" The answer to both questions will be found inside the covers of Miss Barbara Dodds' book.

Miss Dodds recognizes the difficulty for teachers and others trying to give or receive an education in American literature without adequate knowledge of Negro contributions. She takes an exceedingly thorough and critical look at the published American Negro. No chauvinism here. She culls ruthlessly the books she feels are unworthy or unsuited for school use; but she does bring to the reader's attention a large number of valuable books that have been overlooked by textbook publishers and by teachers, both Negro and white. At no time does she attempt to canonize Negro writers. For example, regarding Dunbar's poems, she says, "... not all are worth studying; ... [he] frequently sacrificed quality for popularity." Yet she does not expunge Negro dialect writing, as some Negroes do, but suggests it be compared with white dialect writing. She takes a position on sex in word and scene that most teachers will endorse out of personal or community choice: "Although one of the great novels by a Negro author, *Invisible Man* is not appropriate for most high school students. The language is earthy, and there are several scenes that are very raw." Finally, in discussing books by white writers, she says about *To Kill a Mockingbird,* "Though this book handles the race problem only incidentally, it teaches basic lessons of human relations that are the foundation of good race relations."

Foundations are what English teachers build. If they teach a literature that is markedly without Negro writers, they are saying implicitly each day, Boys and girls, let's open our books today and read about what white people do and think. Some teachers do not know they are implying this; some white students do not know it; most Negro students do—a crushing concept of worthlessness, which must be true because books do not lie: only white people have done any thinking, feeling, achieving worth setting down. Is it this tragic foundation English teachers seek to build?

Perhaps more tragic than the Negro student who cannot find an acceptable self-image in his school literature is the white student who is deprived of a fully rounded education in literature and is misled into believing in his own race's superiority. A social doctrine that may or may not have been intended is promulgated, nevertheless.

While it may be true that literature is not primarily sociology, it is not *not sociology* either. The literate but unscholarly person's knowledge of seventeenth century England comes mainly through Shakespeare; of nineteenth century London through Dickens. Literature has always provided an attitude, the ideas and condition of Man. Today, at this point in history, the thoughts and feelings of Negroes are more than ever essential to the full realization of an American literature.

Essential, too, are the thoughts and feelings of Negroes to a well-developed English curriculum. The curriculum determines to an important degree what is inside of students when they leave school as active citizens and educated men and women. And it is what's inside that counts.

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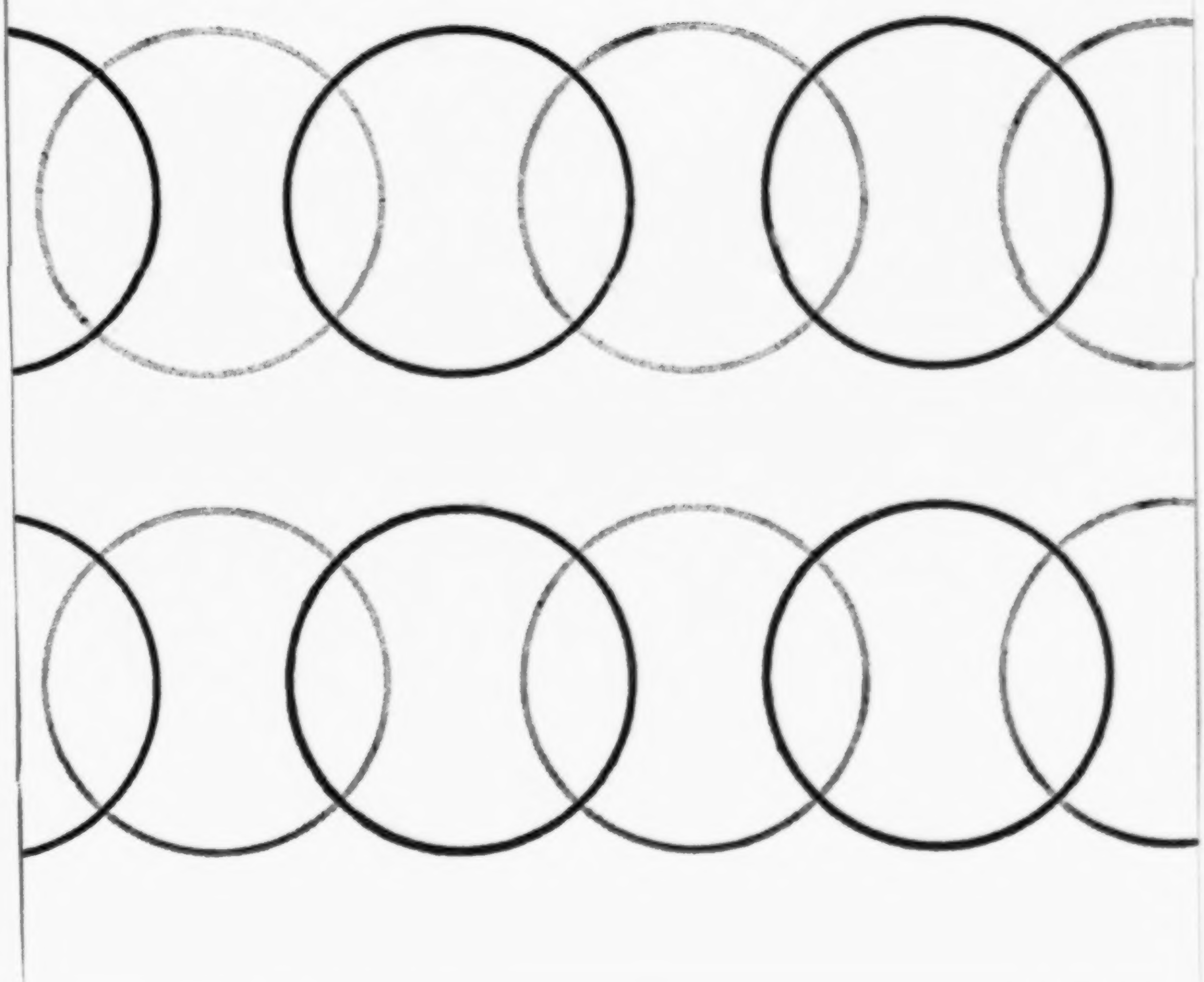
INTRODUCTION



WHITE AMERICAN LITERATURE is the course traditionally taught to high school juniors. It is the course I was taught in high school, the course I was prepared to teach by my college, and the course I was instructed to teach in my curriculum guide. Of course the word "white" was not printed on my high school schedule, my college syllabus, or my course of study, but the omission merely indicates that the writers were unaware that nonwhite Americans exist, let alone that they have always contributed to our literary heritage. In high school, college, and graduate school I was taught one poem by a Negro. I did not realize that my education was incomplete until I watched the thirty bright-eyed students enter my English class on the first day of school. All were brown.

The standard American curriculum does not teach that Negroes are inferior to whites. It does not actively support the myths of prejudice which most white children imbibe with their pabulum (recall the baby picture on the box). The nation which fights Communism for the privilege of teaching the truth does not state lies in its textbooks—usually. But it implies a most dangerous falsehood: that over 10 percent of its citizens do not exist.

The people and problems that are front page news in almost every daily newspaper are completely left out of most English curricula. Textbooks are still subtly, but definitely, slanted toward white people's achievements, either by completely omitting any reference to Negroes or by presenting the few Negroes that are mentioned as caricatures or stereotypes. Of the thirty-seven literature textbooks I examined for this study, twenty did not have a single selection either by or about Negroes and most others had only a few spirituals or poems. Would it be radical to suggest that Langston Hughes, Claude McKay, James Baldwin, Paul Laurence Dunbar and Gwendolyn Brooks deserve recognition as significant American writers along with Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Sarah Eleanor Royce, Henry Timrod, Francis Hopkinson, Stanley Vestal and Bill Mauldin? And even if one denies that Negro authors have talent, surely he cannot deny that Negroes are a part of our world. Yet according to textbooks it would appear that Negroes have no *New Horizons,* have no *Adventures in Living,* do nothing worth telling as *Teen-age Tales* and could not help in developing *Outlooks through Literature.* Dick Gregory and Ralph Bunche apparently have no place in *Literature for Achievement,* and only Dunbar fits into *Worlds to Explore.*

Trade books ignore Negroes just as much as textbooks do. In her article, "The All-White World of Children's Books," Nancy Larrick describes a study of more than 5,000 trade books published for children in 1962, 1963, and 1964. Of the 5,206 children's trade books published by the 63 publishers included in her study, only 349 included one or more Negroes—an average of 6.7 percent. Of these books, almost 60 percent are set outside the United States or before World War II. Only four fifths of one percent tell a story of American Negroes today. "Most of the books are mediocre or worse. More than one third have received unfavorable reviews or been ignored by the three major reviewing media in the juvenile book field."[1]

Discrimination in textbooks and library books leads almost automatically to discrimination in teaching, for few teachers have the time or inclination to hunt up materials that will counteract the evils of segregated textbooks. Nevertheless, some teachers are becoming dissatisfied with their failures. For example, Ted Hipple writes in the *English Journal*:

> I am dissatisfied because I sense that we teachers, especially we teachers of English, are failing to instill in our students an understanding of the humanness and individuality of all people, including those with whom the students do not come into contact in their normal daily routines in the all-white high school in the all-white community.
>
> More specifically, I am bothered that some of my students, among them some of my brightest, have attitudes toward Negroes which are not consonant with the Judeo-Christian ethic, the Declaration of Independence, or even the law of the land as revealed in the Civil Rights Act of 1964. In a word, they are prejudiced. . . . There seems to be a

---

[1] Nancy Larrick, "The All-White World of Children's Books," *Saturday Review,* XVIII (September 11, 1965).

> prevailing attitude of superiority. And, if it is true that as the child goes, so goes the man, and if it is true that these students will influence their generation, then I must conclude that the freedom road for the Negro looms distantly and dimly in some far-off future.[2]

But the prejudice the school is developing in the white child not only makes freedom for the Negro a dream of the future: it also gives the white child a false sense of security. Nancy Larrick writes:

> But the impact of all-white books upon 39,600,000 white children is probably even worse. Although his light skin makes him one of the world's minorities, the white child learns from his books that he is the kingfish. There seems little chance of developing the humility so urgently needed for world cooperation, instead of world conflict, as long as our children are brought up on gentle doses of racism through their books.[3]

If the white student is injured by a false idea of his importance, the Negro student is injured far more by a false idea of his inferiority. Everything in his heritage of which he can be proud is carefully hidden from him. In one of our class discussions, my black students made the following comments about the lack of Negro literature in the elementary school.

> It's like a hidden secret.
>
> In grade school, they had one image of the Negro—illiterate, hard-working, and uneducated.
>
> We didn't have anything in grade school. All we heard about was slavery.
>
> Until I got in high school I didn't know that a Negro was the first to get to the North Pole and that the Negro army founded Lincoln University and lots of things.

The students definitely appreciated the Negro literature we had studied.

> I've really found out that we were somebody.

---

[2] Ted Hipple, "Through Literature to Freedom," *English Journal,* LV (February 1966), 189.

[3] Nancy Larrick, "The All-White World of Children's Books," *Saturday Review,* XVIII (September 11, 1965), 63.

> All the Negro literature we've studied, I've enjoyed it.
>
> It makes you feel pretty good that we've contributed something too.

It is frequently asserted that one reason many Negro children have difficulty learning to read is that they cannot identify with and are not interested in the white children in their textbooks. By the time they reach high school, Negro students have become accustomed to reading about white people, but they have not become interested. My students seemed to be much more interested in reading about Negroes than about whites, though it is difficult to measure reading interests accurately. At the end of the year, I gave the students in my American literature course a survey that asked a number of questions about their opinions of the course. One of the questions asked, "In this course you have been given a number of selections by Negro authors. Would you have preferred more of these selections, the same amount, less, or none?" Of those who turned in the questionnaire, all stated "the same amount" or "more," except one student who wrote "less poetry and more fiction."

But it was in my sophomore class with students of lower ability that the interest in Negro literature was most obvious. I had difficulty in getting a response from them to any literature. The class was bored and said so frequently. Finally, I bought a group of paperbacks including *A Raisin in the Sun, The Lilies of the Field, South Town,* and *Julie's Heritage.* The response was quite exciting. Not only did they carry on the discussion in their own small groups for several days, but they frequently made comments like, "Say, these are pretty good," and, "Why don't we have more things like this?" A number of students read more than the required books, and for weeks after the discussions the books were still circulating.

For many years English teachers and textbooks in American schools have lost many of their bright Negro students because they have not introduced them to their own literature; they have not aroused their interest in education and have nurtured by exclusion a sense of inferiority in the Negro. These same teachers and textbooks have failed to teach their white students the skills and attitudes essential for democracy. While I am writing, Negroes are rioting in our cities. Is a riot what is required to teach what our educational system has failed to teach—that Negroes do exist?

Even if teachers were all convinced that they must give the Negro fair representation in the classroom, they have lived with fiction and superstition so long that reality is strange and difficult. Teachers know almost nothing of literature by and about Negroes, and most college professors know just as little. Most textbooks provide no help. Furthermore, we have little experience with techniques for teaching materials that may be controversial.

I began this study because I too faced the problem of finding literature by and about Negroes which is suitable for high school students and discovering how it can be used. This report introduces the selections I have found and shows some of the ways I used them in my classroom.

METHODS AND MATERIALS

Finding books by and about Negroes is not always easy. However, I found several very useful sources. The New York Public Library has prepared several booklists on Negro literature. These lists give only the title and sometimes a sentence description, but they are helpful in suggesting books. There is a very thorough list, *Books by and about the American Negro*, which is for adults and includes social science material as well as literary material. *Books by and about the American Negro: A Selected List for Young Adults, 1966* and *Recent Titles about the American Negro for Young Adults* are also available from the New York Public Library. A booklet, *The Negro in American Literature* by the Wisconsin Council of Teachers of English, has many helpful suggestions for the teacher.

There are several books available that give a good background on Negro literature. Robert Bone's *The Negro Novel in America* is a thorough, scholarly study of the Negro novel up to 1952. An excellent introduction for teachers, it not only gives a detailed summary and criticism of all the major works, but it relates the works to the historical and sociological periods that produced them. Herman Dreer's *American Literature by Negro Authors* is a good source of information about earlier writers. Benjamin Brawley's *Early Negro American Writers* contains biographical sketches of early writers and samples of their work. This is a very valuable work as many of the selections included here are not available elsewhere.

For samples of Negro poets, Langston Hughes and Arna Bontemps' *The Poetry of the Negro* is quite thorough, and Countee Cullen's *Caroling Dusk* is also useful.

The most difficult information to find is material on contemporary writers. There have probably been more significant novels written by Negroes in the last fifteen years than in the hundred years before; yet both Bone's and Dreer's works include only novels through the early 1950's. Langston Hughes' *The Best Short Stories by Negro Writers,* on the other hand, provides the names and samples of the work of contemporary writers. Book reviews in *The Crisis*, the *Negro Digest,* and *Ebony* introduce other contemporary Negro writers.

Libraries, particularly those in the Negro areas of large cities are helpful in suggesting Negro literature. The Countee Cullen Library and the Schomberg collection of Negro literature in New York City probably have the most complete collection of Negro literature in the country. However, I also found a number of books in the St. Louis public library and the Vashon High School library in St. Louis.

Finding books by Negro authors was only a part of this project. Some of the books were scarcely worth the dust they were buried under on the back shelves of libraries, while others, frequently as unknown and hard to find, were rare masterpieces. Others, while very good, were unsuitable for high school students. Recognizing that one person's evaluation of a book is often inaccurate and influenced by personal preferences and prejudices, I have tried to give enough comment on the books to enable the reader to judge for himself. However, I also want to make clear to the reader the criteria that I have used in judging whether or not a book is of high enough quality to justify its being read.

The qualities I looked for included (1) significant theme or problem—a good book should deal with a problem that is general enough that all readers can identify with the characters; (2) characters that are well rounded, with interesting personalities, not stereotypes; (3) a plot that solves the basic problem in a realistic manner; (4) setting that is portrayed accurately; (5) style that reflects sensitivity to language and imagination.

In addition to these literary qualities, there are special qualifications that are necessary to make a book appeal to the average adolescent. Norvell, Terman, Thorndike and Strang have done much research on the reading interests of adolescents. They seem to agree that the following ingredients usually interest teenagers: adventure, obvious humor, animals, patriotism, and suspense. Girls usually enjoy stories about romance, home life and school life but do not like grim adventure. Boys usually do not like sentimental books or books about love, home life, religion or books where the main character is a girl.

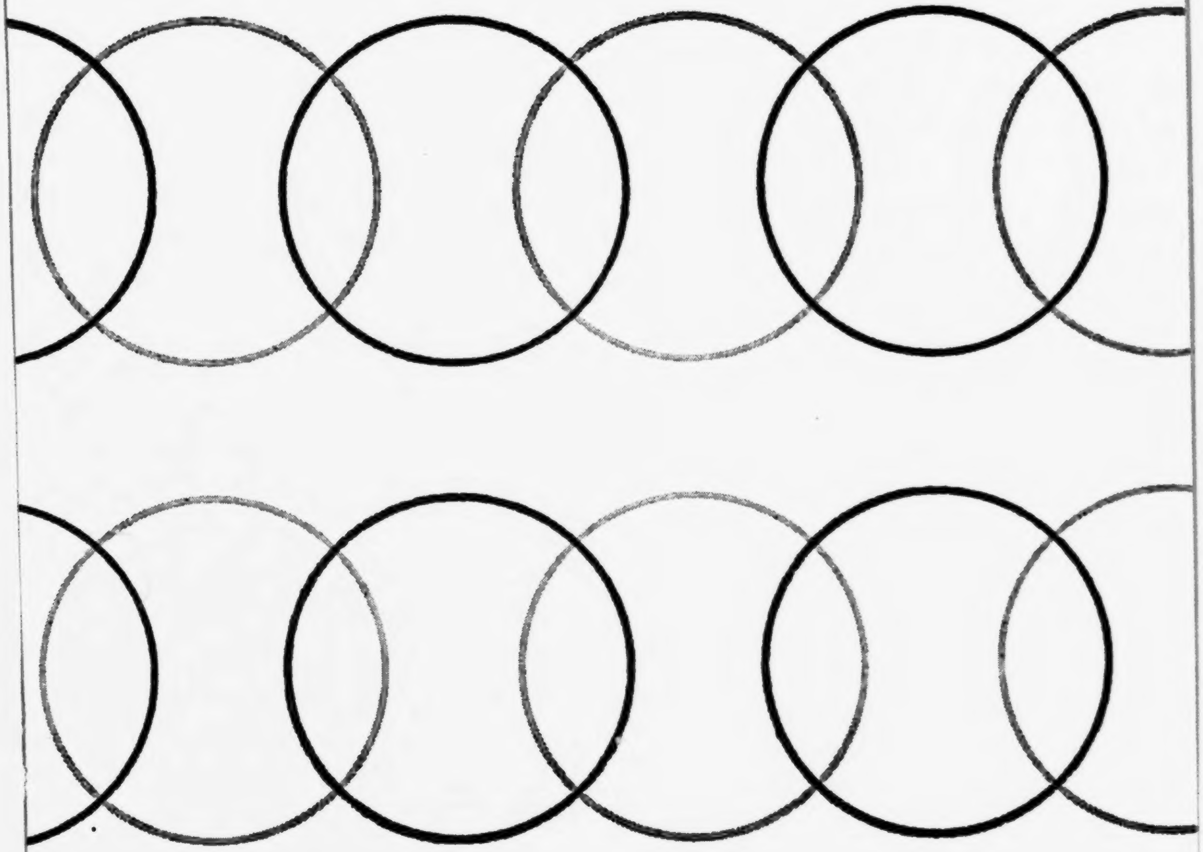
Because this study is primarily for the English teacher, I decided to limit the materials to those most often used in the English classroom: the novel, the short story, poetry and biography. There are a number of excellent books available on the history of the Negro and sociological problems of the Negro. Many of them are listed in the New York Public Library pamphlets.

Publication information has been checked against the 1967 edition of *Books in Print*. In several cases more editions are available than are cited here. Teachers, who are probably more interested in the current paperbound editions than hardbound, will be glad to know that many of the books listed here are available in paperbound.

It is possible that books which are now out of print (o.p.) will be made available again at some time in the future. One would be wise to check the latest *Books in Print* and *Paperbound Books in Print* for information on interesting books. If these sources do not include the titles needed, perhaps a library nearby will help.

The following pages include a short historical survey of Negro writers, reviews of a number of junior novels and biographies, and suggestions on how these might be used in the classroom. It is hoped that this work will be of help to the English teacher today. But it would be even more pleasing to see this book become obsolete—to see Negro literature become a part of the curriculum, not something to be tacked on in an appendix or a special book.

HISTORICAL SURVEY OF NEGRO WRITERS



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ANTHOLOGIES OF NEGRO LITERATURE, *50*

THIS HISTORICAL SURVEY of Negro authors, arranged in rough chronological order, points to some of the material which can be added to the American literature survey usually taught in American high schools and colleges. This section contains by no means every book or author. For a more thorough historical survey the readers should see *The Negro Novel in America, The Poetry of the Negro,* and *Early American Negro Writers* (all described here).

The books in this section are definitely adult books. While some of these books are appropriate for younger readers, most of them would be recommended only for older, more mature students. Most of the novels deal frankly and often bitterly with the tragedy of segregation. Unlike the junior novels, whose prevailing tone points out the possibility of good relations between the races, the majority of the adult novels emphasize the horrible results of segregation. Most do not encourage reconciliation; in fact, many are cynical about brotherhood. These novels deal frankly and openly with sex and use violent language. I would strongly advise that a teacher read any of the books which she assigns, not only so that she will be aware of what she is assigning, but also for the insight they give into the problems of the black man.

PRE CIVIL WAR WRITERS

Most early Negro writings, like other early American writings, are of rather poor quality and have more historical than literary value. Probably the earliest poem on record by a Negro is "Bar's Fight" by Lucy Terry. Little more than doggerel, it is nevertheless quite humorous.

PHILLIS WHEATLEY (1753-1784)

Phillis Wheatley is the best known of the early Negro writers. Her works include a number of poems, many of which are collected in the book *Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral. Poems of Phillis Wheatley,* edited by Julian D. Mason, Jr. (U.S.N.C.), is a new edition and in print. All of her poems are in the classic tradition with frequent mythological references, stilted vocabulary, and exaggerated rhythm and rhyme. Although they are not great literature, they compare favorably with any other American poetry of that period. Her writings are of low interest value, and they are difficult to understand because of the vocabulary, classic references, and frequent personal subject matter.

As a sample of her work, the third stanza of "To the Right Honorable William, Earl of Dartmouth" is a good poem glorifying freedom and would be enough to satisfy most students' curiosity about her work.

Shirley Graham has written a biography of Phillis Wheatley.

BENJAMIN BANNEKER (1731-1806)

Benjamin Banneker was known primarily as an inventor and astronomer, and his writings include only almanacs and letters. However, his letters are very imaginative and well written. Particularly interesting are his "Letter to the Secretary of State" and "A Plan of Peace-Office for the United States." The former is a plea for justice for the Negro and an excellent example of argumentative writing. My students enjoyed it very much, and in fact several nominated it as the best selection of the semester. Both of these selections can be found in Benjamin Brawley's *Early Negro American Writers* (1935, o.p.). For further information about Benjamin Banneker, a biography is available.

FREDERICK DOUGLASS (1817-1895)

Frederick Douglass, the outstanding abolitionist orator has written several autobiographies. The most complete of these is *The Life and Times of Frederick Douglass* (New York: Pathway Press, 1941, o.p.; reissued). A shorter biography is *Narrative of a Slave* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960). Both of these are discussed in the section on biography, pp. 92-93. A number of Douglass' speeches also merit study. They can be found in *The Life and Times of Frederick Douglass* and in Brawley's *Early Negro American Writers.*

POST CIVIL WAR WRITERS

The Civil War removed the most oppressive restrictions upon

Negro thought. It was no longer frowned on for Negroes to learn to read, and a Negro possessed with an almost superhuman drive could get an education. However, the Negro writer still faced many obstacles including the prejudice of publishers, restrictions upon subject matter, and the problem of making a living.

Much of the writing of this period is somewhat conservative, attempting to minimize the injustices suffered by the Negro and to reassure the whites that the Negro appreciated their kindness. Because of the unprecedented improvements in Negro life during Reconstruction, many Negroes believed that they could become equal citizens as soon as they became educated. Booker T. Washington, whose autobiography *Up from Slavery* is discussed in the biography section, was the spokesman for this position. However, by the beginning of the twentieth century, Negroes had become thoroughly disillusioned by the oppressive Jim Crow laws which were being legislated, and a strong protest movement began to grow led by W. E. B. DuBois. A number of earlier writers had written protest novels, but many of them tended to be a plea for special treatment for the educated Negro, not a general plea against discrimination. Also, the protest writers such as Sutton Griggs and William Wells Brown were unskilled writers.

Like many white writers of the period, some Negro writers attempted to use the folk traditions of their people. James Weldon Johnson, Paul Laurence Dunbar and Charles W. Chesnutt, who wrote a number of stories and novels, were quite successful. Other writers tried to imitate the genteel writers by showing that middle-class Negroes could be as refined as white people.

PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR (1872-1906)

Paul Laurence Dunbar, the best known of the early Negro writers, was the first Negro to make his living by writing. A prolific writer, he completed several volumes of poetry, several collections of short stories, and four novels. However, not all are worth studying; Dunbar frequently sacrificed quality for popularity.

Dunbar's works are suitable for high school students because they are simple to understand but demonstrate good poetic technique. Dunbar's topics are those that appeal to teenagers—love, family life, humor, and inspirational subjects. There is almost nothing objectionable in any of his poems except his occasionally stereotyped portrayal of Negroes. Dunbar's poems fall into two categories: dialect poems that tend to use folk humor and stereotype, and nondialect poems that frequently have no racial overtones.

My students were somewhat uncertain at first whether or not they liked dialect poetry. They tended to feel that dialect was degrading and helped to perpetuate an unfavorable stereotype of the Negro. However, discussing Dunbar in connection with other dialect writers such as James Whitcomb Riley made them feel less self-conscious about dialect. And a critical analysis of the technique showed them that it was not necessarily of poor quality. While students were not quite certain that they approved of some of the characteristics of Dunbar's writing, they very obviously liked it. A reading of "Little Brown Baby" by one of the more talented and courageous students always delighted them.

An interesting series of dialect poems for any level would be "Little Brown Baby," "Scamp," and "Wadin' in de Crick." There's a nice progression from the "Little Brown Baby" who's scared of the bogey man, to "Scamp," the tired toddler, to the schoolboy in "Wadin' in de Crick."

Other humorous dialect poems deal with love and courtship. "Discovered" is about two false lovers. "The Rivals" is about two boys who fight over the same girl. "A Frolick" is also about boys chasing girls, and "The Old Front Gate" shows a father's view of courtship. Another humorous poem in a different vein is "The Lawyer's Ways" about a lawyer's tricks in describing one person two different ways.

Another interesting variation in dialect poetry is the tragic poem, "Puttin' the Baby Away." Here the dialect expresses poignantly a father's grief at his child's death, and students were able to see how deep emotions can well be expressed in simple words.

Dunbar's nondialect poetry is good, but not so appealing. One group of nondialect poems that would be useful is his series about famous people: "Douglass," "Booker T. Washington," and "Lincoln."

Dunbar's four-line poems are also useful for high school because they are short but very carefully constructed with vivid imagery. Among the interesting four-line poems are "Theology," "Resignation," "Love's Humility," "Distinction," "Dawn," "To a Captious Critic," and "We Wear the Mask."

Many of Dunbar's poems are romantic poems, but most have a slightly bitter edge. They are generally short and frequently have a rather pithy comment.

Although Dunbar is best known for his poetry, he has also written novels and short stories. His short stories are generally humorous local color stories that poke gentle fun at the foolishness of mankind. However, they are often in a plantation setting and use the stereotype of the Negro as a childish, immature person to be humored by kind-hearted plantation owners. Particularly objectionable are stories in his collection *In Old Plantation Days* (o.p.). In one of these stories, Brother Parker, a Negro minister, was a party to his young master's fun at frightening all the Negroes away from a rival preacher's service. Another story tells of a slave woman who was given money by her master to buy a slave for him and did so without any thought of freeing him or buying her own freedom.

However, another of Dunbar's collections, *Folks from Dixie* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1899, o.p.), has some stories that might be suitable for students, though several still stereotype the Negro. "The Ordeal at Mt. Hope" is an interesting story of a well-educated Negro preacher who went to a small village where the people had no goals or ideals. "At Shaft 11" is about Negro strike breakers who fought and won a place for themselves at the mine.

The collection, *The Strength of Gideon and Other Stories* (o.p.), has more variety than Dunbar's other collections and less of the objectionable stereotype. The stories concern topics ranging from plantation life to political maneuvers. There are still some characters that old plantation owners would like, but in several stories, Dunbar makes a strong protest against discrimination and a plea for proper treatment of the Negro. "The Tragedy at Three Forks" is a lynching story. A poor white girl set fire to a house out of jealousy and then watched in horror as two Negroes were lynched for the crime. Her own lover was killed in a fight ensuing from the lynching.

Among other stories in this collection that would be useful for high school students are "The Ingrate" and "One Man's Fortune" and "A Council of State" which show some of the problems of Negroes in getting ahead. "The Finish of Patsy Barnes" and "Johnsonham, Junior" are two interesting stories that have almost no racial identification.

The Heart of Happy Hollow (o. p.) is a collection of sentimental stories about a variety of intriguing characters who lived in Little Africa. There was the political boss, Mr. Asbury, who in "The Scapegoat" got revenge on his political enemies who had tried to use him as a scapegoat. "The Race Question" pokes gentle fun at an old Baptist who believed that horse racing was wrong and tried to rationalize his enjoyment of it. A more serious story is "Old Abe's Conversion" in which an old preacher learned to understand his son's modern ways. In "The Lynching of Jube Benson" an old doctor tells sorrowfully of his lynching a friend by mistake.

Dunbar's novels, being written in the worst genteel tradition, are practically useless. Except for *The Sport of the Gods* (1902, o. p.) they are all about white people, and the descriptions of the Negro are frequently quite offensive.

Most of Dunbar's prose selections are out of print, but they can still be found in many libraries. *The Complete Poems of Paul Laurence Dunbar* was published by Dodd, Mead & Co., New York, 1940. *Little Brown Baby* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1940) is a collection of his poetry for children. Benjamin Brawley has edited a collection *Selected Stories of Dunbar* (o.p.), and samples of his writing appear in almost all Negro collections.

W. E. BURGHARDT DuBOIS (1868-1963)

The Souls of Black Folk (New York: The Blue Heron Press, 1953, o.p.; reissued Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith) is a collection of well-written essays and narrative exploring historical and sociological aspects of the race problem. Written in the early part of the twentieth century, many of the essays are out of date, though still significant for historical interest. Others appear quite modern.

DuBois is famous for his opposition to Washington's Atlanta Compromise and in the selection "Of Booker T. Washington," he gives a calm, reasonable, but powerful indictment of Washington's policies. This essay would make a good study in argument techniques or a good comparison with *Up from Slavery.*

Two narratives from *The Souls of Black Folk* might be used. "Of the Meaning of Progress" is the poignant story of the backwoods community where DuBois first taught school. It shows the tragedy but also the beauty and strength of people barely managing to subsist against nature. "Of the Coming of John" tells the tragedy of an educated Negro who refused to accept segregation.

DuBois has written one outstanding poem that is included in most collections of Negro poetry. "A Litany at Atlanta" uses the litany form and vivid imagery to show the plea of the Negro for freedom and justice.

DuBois has also written two novels, *The Quest of the Silver Fleece* and *Dark Princess,* but these are out of print and not very significant.

JAMES WELDON JOHNSON (1871-1938)

James Weldon Johnson's poem "The Creation" is probably the most popular of all poems by a Negro writer. It is included in several textbooks and is frequently recited or presented as a choral reading. It and the other selections in *God's Trombones* (New York: The Viking Press, Inc., 1927) retell Bible stories in vivid modern language in the style of a Negro preacher, but without dialect. The poems include: "Listen Lor, a Prayer," "The Creation," "The Prodigal Son," "Go Down Death," "Noah Built the Ark," "The Crucifixion," "Let My People Go," and "The Judgment Day." I have found that both white and Negro students enjoy reading these poems aloud with action or as choral readings, and a good number enjoy memorizing "The Creation" even though it is quite long.

Other of Johnson's poems can be found in *Caroling Dusk,* a collection edited by Countee Cullen. The best of these are "The Glory of the Day Was in Her Face" and "My City." These poems, as well as "Fifty Years," are about the fiftieth anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation. "Since You Went Away," a dialect poem, and "Lift Every Voice," the Negro national anthem, are in Hughes and Bontemps' *The Poetry of the Negro.*

Johnson's novel, *The Autobiography of an Ex-Coloured Man* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1927), is about a very light-skinned colored man who at first did not realize that he was a Negro. He was shattered when his school principal informed him of his race. After the death of his mother and loss of the money he had for college, he spent some time in a cigar factory in the South. Then he became a jazz musician and with the help of a millionaire went to Europe. He returned South to write Negro music, but forsook his race after he witnessed a lynching. He finally passed for white and married a white girl.

The literary quality of the book is high, the style interesting and not too difficult. The character development is strong. The theme is tragic—not because a man falls after achieving something significant but because he just never does live up to his potential. It concerns the loss of ideals, the conflict between social-financial success and other goals, in the struggle between cowardice and courage. The problems of race are discussed at length but too often in passages that are not related to the plot and slow the action. Much of the discussion seems outdated and compromising. This is the best early novel by a Negro writer, though it is not as good as many recent books.

Along This Way (New York: The Viking Press, Inc., 1933), Johnson's autobiography, shows the life of a middle-class Negro in Florida. The biography is lengthy and tends to become bogged down in details that were of considerable significance to Johnson's immediate family but have little interest to outsiders. This tame, middle-class life is not as interesting as some of the other autobiographies. There are some excellent sections, however, especially about his first job as a principal and his struggles to become a lawyer. Some students might enjoy it.

THE NEGRO RENAISSANCE

The 1920's noisily brought in the Negro Renaissance—the exciting period when outstanding black writers suddenly began to appear and to assert the values of Negro culture instead of middle-class society. It was also a period when white writers became intrigued with Negroes, and Harlem became the most exciting part of New York.

Several factors contributed to the blossoming of the Negro Renaissance. By the 1920's education for Negroes, though still difficult, was not unusual, and a fairly large middle class and a small intelligentsia had developed. Harlem developed into a center for Negro culture, where Negro writers and thinkers could analyze their work together and share the problems of writing.

By the 1920's the Negro writer was able to assume a more mature attitude toward the white culture. He had attained enough freedom to assert himself as an individual; however, he had also experienced enough discrimination to know that assimilation was not possible for him, so he turned in the other direction, toward self-assertion. Earlier Negro writings had attacked the cruelties of the white culture; the writers of the Renaissance revolted against the culture itself. The Negro Renaissance affirms that the white culture is weak, or at least inferior to the black culture, and that the Negro should refuse assimilation.

The white culture encouraged this rejection, for this was the time of the roaring 20's, and the whites were themselves rejecting their Victorian culture. Many came to Harlem seeking a new culture.

Writing flourished. The writers of this period were capable craftsmen who could stand on their own merits in competition with other American writers.

CLAUDE McKAY (1891-1948)

Claude McKay was one of the most outspoken of the Negro Renaissance writers—openly embracing ideas generally considered repugnant. He pointed out the weaknesses of the white culture while predicting its downfall. He gloried in both the virtues and what others may consider the vices of the Negro and advocated revolt against whites and their culture. Many of his ideas are now being popularized by the Black Power movement.

My Negro students seemed to have mixed reactions to the

McKay poems that we studied. Several rejoiced in his rebellion: "He wasn't an Uncle Tom," "He showed that Negroes have some gumption and aren't always yes-men." Others, however, felt that he emphasized violence too much and that his ideas were dangerous.

McKay's poetry is mature and shows a careful artistry. His poetic technique is well developed, and his effects are often subtle. His poetry does not have the folksy appeal of Johnson's or Dunbar's and is generally more appropriate for advanced and intellectually able students. His poems include very sensitive, nostalgic nature poems about Jamaica that are generally too subtle for high school students. Some of his protest poems are rather violently antiwhite and some of his romantic poems deal a little more openly and intimately with the sex act than most school boards might approve.

The Selected Poems of Claude McKay (New York: Bookman Associates, 1953) contains the following poems that might be usable in high school. "Flame-Heart" is a long poem about his memories of his childhood in Jamaica. "Summer Morn in New Hampshire" is a delicate poem about night and dawn far away from love. "Baptism" combines the strength of character of his more violent protest poems with a less violent attitude. "If We Must Die" portrays vividly the militant spirit of the fight against oppression. "To the White Fiends" explains that the Negro is better than the white because he shows the light of humanity instead of trying to match the whites' cruelty. "Truth" might appeal to adolescents who are confused about the meaning of truth. "America" demonstrates the Negroes' conflicting feelings about America—love for "this cultured hell that tests my youth" and rebellion against her.

"The Harlem Dancer" is a sympathetic picture of the falsely smiling face of the girl dancing for prostitutes and their customers. "The Wild Goat" compares the wild goat who languishes in captivity with the poet who wants freedom. "On Broadway" expresses loneliness amid the bright lights of the city. "A Song of the Moon" shows how moonlight loses its magic in the city and so must return to the country. "The Castaways" contrasts the beauties of nature with the dregs of humanity, which the poet cannot bear to see.

McKay's novels are inferior to his poems. All of them attempt to affirm the primitive Negro against decaying Western civilization. *Home to Harlem* (New York: Pocket Books, Inc.) and its sequel *Banjo* (o.p.) both follow the life of a free, primitive, vagabond Negro and are interpreted by Ray, a young intellectual who wanted to be free. *Banjo* is a long series of slightly related incidents in the lives of the beach-bums of Marseilles. The characters are lively and human, but a plot is almost nonexistent. The style is generally vivid, but Ray has too many soliloquies expounding McKay's philosophy. His third novel, *Banana Bottom* (o. p.), contrasts Jamaican folk culture with the stifling missionary culture.

McKay's novels in many ways are similar to Langston Hughes' Simple stories. Both affirm the folk Negro culture in contrast to refined white culture. Both are a series of slightly related incidents, and both have a folk character and an educated interpreter. McKay's novels are a little more radical, dealing with lower-class people and developing the theme more thoroughly. Langston Hughes, however, is more usable with high school students for his works are shorter, more modern, and generally easier reading.

JEAN TOOMER (1894-1967)

> *Cane* is an important American novel. By far the most impressive product of the Negro Renaissance, it ranks with Richard Wright's *Native Son* and Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* as a measure of the Negro novelist's highest achievement. Jean Toomer belongs to that first rank of writers who use words almost as a plastic medium shaping new meanings from an original and highly personal style. Since stylistic innovation requires great technical dexterity, Toomer displays a concern for technique which is fully two decades in advance of the period. While his contemporaries of the Harlem school were still experimenting with a crude literary realism, Toomer had progressed beyond the naturalistic novel to the "higher realism of the emotions" to symbol, and to myth.[1]

Cane (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1923, o.p.; reissued New York: University Place Book Shop) is an unusual book, a series of vignettes and poems about life among Negroes in the South. It gives an impression like a photograph album of a trip. Some of the pictures, like the one of Robert, are only character sketches; "Kabnis" is almost a novelette; many are poems, and other selections vary in length. Subjects, too, vary from the tender story of lovely Fern who could not find love with anyone to the story of Bessie, the outcast white woman with two Negro children. Although the themes are often of violence and oppression, the characters are built with sympathy and understanding. The work is out of print, and copies are quite rare, though several of the poems are reprinted in most Negro poetry collections. Jean Toomer did not fulfill the promise of this remarkable work but instead disappeared from the literary scene.

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[1] Robert Bone, *The Negro Novel in America* (Rev. ed.; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965), p. 81.

COUNTEE CULLEN (1903-1946)

Countee Cullen was one of the most significant writers of the Negro Renaissance. More middle-class than McKay, he wrote with pathos and understatement instead of violence and passion. *On These I Stand* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1947) is a selection of his best poems. The poems from *Color* (o. p.) deal with the Negro's search for identity and the meaning of race. "Yet Do I Marvel," one of Cullen's most famous poems, asks how God could make a poet black and bid him sing. "The Shroud of Color" is a long poem that explores the meaning of color in a kind of mystical vision. "Heritage" explores the relationship of the Negro to his African heritage. Two other poems with milder racial undertones that should be useful with high school students are "Saturday's Child," about a child born into poverty, and "Tableau," about a white boy and a Negro walking together.

Cullen's "Epitaphs" are short, but convey much meaning in a few words. Among the most interesting are "For My Grandmother," "For a Mouthy Woman," "She of the Dancing Feet Sings," and "The Wise."

"The Black Christ" is a very long poem (32 pages) and quite difficult. In it, Christ returned to substitute for a Negro boy who was to be lynched.

Along with his original poetry, Cullen has made a simple prose translation of *Medea*: *The Medea and Some Poems* (New York: Harper and Bros., 1935, o.p.). He also has one novel, *One Way to Heaven* (New York: Harper and Bros., 1932, o. p.). The story starts with Sam Lucas, a fake repenter, who put on a demonstration for a Harlem congregation and converted Mattie Johnson, who then fell in love with him. After the unregenerate old sinner married Mattie, the scene switches to Mrs. Brandon, the head of the new Negro elite for whom Mattie worked. Mrs. Brandon started her social season by giving Mattie, her former maid, a fabulous wedding that was ended with a speech by a rabid Southern segregationist. Among the unusual people collected by Mrs. Brandon and described by Cullen are a number of writers and duchesses of the back-to-Africa campaign. The story finally returns to Sam, who had grown tired of Mattie but died faking a death-bed conversion for her.

Mr. Cullen's style, humor, and excellent description make this book of higher quality than most. Characterization, though humorous, is excellent, and the portrayal of society almost reminds one of Henry James.

While some students might resent his poking fun at Negroes and his use of the stereotype of the religious fake, his humor is sympathetic enough that it is not likely to be harmful.

ZORA NEALE HURSTON (1903-1960)

Their Eyes Were Watching God (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Co., 1937, o. p.) is one of the more significant Negro novels of the period. While it is not a great book, it is a very good one. It has a sensitivity in language that at times becomes poetic. Theme and character are developed well. From tender adolescent dreams, Janie was forced into a respectable but loveless marriage. She soon ran off with romance, but it too became respectable and she found herself the mayor's wife, but still not in love. Finally, as a forty-year-old widow with a fortune, she threw over her respectable position for a young gambler who offered nothing but love. Although her two years with Teacake brought terrible suffering, Janie felt that she had found fulfillment.

Their Eyes Were Watching God treats significantly and appealingly the strength and depth a person was capable of, when willing, escaping the imprisonment of social convention. It eloquently portrays the superiority of lower-class vitality over middle-class banality. This is a book worth studying as literature or reading for pleasure.

Other novels by Zora Neale Hurston include *Jonah's Gourd Vine* (1934, o. p.) and *Seraph on the Suwanee* (1948, o. p.).

NELLA LARSEN

Nella Larsen wrote sentimental women's novels that are not quite successful. Her novels seem to be trying too hard: the characters are overdrawn, the conflicts are exaggerated, and the plots are too shocking. *Passing* (1929, o. p.) contrasts Irene, who had stayed with her people and married a well-to-do Negro, with Clare, a Negro who had married a wealthy white man. Clare was unhappy and wanted to return to Negro life but could not because of her husband and daughter. She had an affair with Irene's husband and as a result Irene pushed her out of the window.

In *Quicksand* (1928, o. p.), Helga Crane, a mulatto, tried to find a place where she could belong. She rejected Negroes and was not satisfied in Denmark with white people. Finally she married a Southern preacher and, still not satisfied, she felt that she was imprisoned in a routine of bearing and raising children.

ARNA BONTEMPS (1902–)

Arna Bontemps is one of the most important figures in American Negro literature, although he is probably better known for his anthologies and Negro history collections than for his own work.

Bontemps' best novel is *Black Thunder* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1936, o. p.). It is a panoramic view of a slave rebellion in Virginia. Gabriel, the leader of the revolt, is the central character, but the scene shifts through a number of minor characters—both Negro and white—who are connected with the plot. With this panoramic technique, Bontemps successfully maintains suspense for a very short plot.

Black Thunder would be an effective book for high school students. Gabriel, though primitive, was a powerful leader who commanded respect. Revolt, adventure, escape, and just a touch of romance make a high interest rating for adolescents. Although some may object to the justification of violence, the yearning for freedom is a theme all should respond to.

Bontemps has written two other novels, *God Sends Sunday* (1931, o. p.) about the sporting world of racetrack gamblers and *Drums at Dusk* (1939, o. p.) about the Haitian slave rebellion.

Bontemps has written much poetry, but the subject is often nature, and this has a limited appeal to adolescents. "Golgotha Is a Mountain" tells of man's history in mountains. "Idolatry" and "A Note of Humility" both deal with death. His poetry can be found in Hughes and Bontemps' *The Poetry of the Negro* (New York: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1949) and in his collection, *Personals* (London: Paul Brennen, 1963).

LANGSTON HUGHES (1902-1967)

"Hughes, perhaps more than any other author, knows and loves the Negro masses."[2] That is why Hughes, perhaps more than any other writer, appeals to the masses of Negro high school students. Both verse and stories are easy to understand, but written with skill. Unlike many other Negro authors, Hughes neither wrote about the dull, cultured, intellectual elite, who are unpopular with students, nor did he glory in gory lynchings and sex perversions, which are unpopular with school boards. His writings are about poor, ordinary people but with a strong sense of humor. When asked what Negro writers they like, students invariably list Hughes.

Langston Hughes is difficult to classify as a writer. He was among the leaders of the Negro Renaissance, but he continued to write later than most others of this period. He wrote poetry, short stories, novels, essays and edited many collections of Negro writings.

Hughes had written a number of short story collections, among them *Laughing to Keep from Crying* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1952, o. p.), *Something in Common and Other Stories* (New York: Hill & Wang, Inc., 1963), and *The Ways of White Folks* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1934). Most of the stories are humorous, but one always knows that much of the laughing is "to keep from crying." Topics vary from white tourists in Harlem to brothels in Cuba to standard problems of getting a job and family spats. Although many of the stories deal with prostitutes and drinking and other forms of "low life," these are not treated in an objectionable manner.

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[2] Robert Bone, *The Negro Novel in America*, p. 75.

Among the best of Hughes' stories for high school students is "Thank you, Ma'am," a story of a young boy who tried to snatch a purse from a strong, motherly woman who took him home and fed him. "On the Road" is a powerful, symbolic story of a Negro who tried to tear off the door of a church that would not help him when he was freezing and starving. "The Big Meeting" tells of two Negro boys who came to a revival to laugh but were offended when whites made fun of their mothers. Both the whites and the boys were finally deeply affected by the sermon.

The Simple stories are another large body of Hughes' writing. The Simple stories are collected in *Simple Speaks His Mind* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1950, o. p.), *Simple Takes a Wife* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1953, o. p.), *Simple Stakes a Claim* (New York: Rinehart and Co, Inc., 1953, o. p.), *The Best of Simple* (New York: Hill & Wang, Inc., 1961) and *Simple's Uncle Sam* (New York: Hill & Wang, Inc., 1965). All these collections give vignettes of Simple, an average, Alabama-born Harlem man who commented on current situations over the barstool to his college-educated pal. Discussions range from the space race to Mississippi to Cousin Minnie but always bring up the race problem in some way. The humor and interest in the Simple stories comes from the variety of well-developed characters including the wife Joyce, who wanted to move to the suburbs and enjoy culture; ugly Cousin Minnie, whom Simple had never heard of before she appeared asking him for money; and Simple himself, one of the most original philosophers of the decade. His discussions on race are presented with delightful humor that does not quite mask their depth of bitterness and injury.

Although my students seemed to enjoy the Simple selections that we heard in class, they seemed a little uneasy at a few of Simple's more violent comments. They also seemed a little uneasy at the thought of white people reading them and making fun of Negroes. While most students, white and colored, would probably enjoy and gain much from the Simple stories, they might be embarrassed by hearing or discussing them in the classroom, especially a mixed class.

Not without Laughter (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1930), Langston Hughes' first novel, was written while he was still in college and still strongly influenced by the Negro Renaissance. Though somewhat defective as a work of art, *Not without Laughter* has possibility for use with high school students. Not exactly autobiographical but based on Hughes' experiences as a child, the book tells of the problems of a poor boy who grew up in Kansas. Poverty was the villain that separated his parents, sent his aunt into prostitution, made his grandmother die from overwork, and forced his successful aunt to cut all ties with her poor family. Sandy was sent around from one member of the family to another but, with a strong will and encouragement from all, managed to keep out of trouble.

There is not much excitement, and the plot is rather formless. The main interest in the book is in the characters, who are very realistic, alive, and humorous: Jimboy, the fun-loving, roving father; Angee, the dreamless, stay-at-home wife; adventurous Harriett who finally made good on the stage; and Hagar, the long-suffering grandmother. *Not without Laughter* deals very realistically with all the problems faced by a child growing up in poverty and finding the strength necessary to overcome it.

Hughes' second novel is *Tambourines to Glory* (New York: John Day Co., 1958, o. p.). It is about Essie Belle Johnson, a deeply religious but not very intelligent woman, who paired up with Laura, a very clever but quite unreligious opportunist, to form a church. Starting as sidewalk preachers, they eventually worked up to the biggest church in Harlem. Essie's main interest was to get her lovely young daughter Marietta to come to New

York, and Laura's main interest was her handsome hustler Buddy. When Buddy proved unfaithful, Laura plotted to get rid of both Buddy and Essie by killing Buddy and blaming it on Essie. But the scheme backfired. Essie won and became the leader of the church.

The plot is contrived and not meant to be taken seriously. The murder scene and the following events sound like a sequence from a Danny Kaye movie. The characters, though close to the stereotype, are quite well delineated and quite human. The scheming, unprincipled Laura is especially lively. The style is fairly humorous. Although not extremely interesting, the book is pleasant enough reading. Some students might find it offensive because of the way it makes fun of both the Negro and religion. Used improperly it could help to contribute to an unfavorable stereotype of the Negro.

The Big Sea (New York: Hill & Wang, Inc., 1963) is Hughes' autobiography, and his life provides a fascinating subject for an autobiography. Shunted around from relative to relative, he seemed to learn something from each one. Pride from his grandmother, religion from Auntie Reed, and courage from his mother were his heritage. At seventeen, he went to Mexico to visit his father, whom he began to dislike, for his father was interested only in making money and was contemptuous of the poor, common people that Langston loved.

After a year at Columbia University, Hughes began work as a sailor, and the next section of the book relates his exciting adventures in Africa and Europe where he was often stranded without money or food. By the time he returned to America, the traits that so enliven his writing were well established: a love of adventure, a carefree spirit, a deep love of the common people, and a sense of humor that can laugh at the most serious problems. *The Big Sea* is an exciting book and is likely to be interesting to adolescents. Dealing with problems of becoming an adult and finding one's place in the world, it is a valuable book for teenagers. Also, its antimiddle-class values should give them something to think about.

Five Plays by Langston Hughes, edited by Webster Smalley (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1963), has several selections that might be useful with high school students. *Simply Heavenly,* a play made from the Simple stories, might be the most entertaining. The play is a comedy centering on Simple's attempts to marry Joyce and escape the clutches of his former wife Isabel and his former girl friend, Zarita. Comedy develops around Simple's bar companions and Zarita's schemes to steal him from Joyce.

Little Ham is a funny play about numbers racketeers and fights over girl friends. But since it definitely shows the lower side of Negro life, some might object to it. *Tambourines to Glory* is a play based on the novel by the same name. A more serious play is *Mulatto,* a bloody play about the mulatto son of a planter who refused to be a slave and eventually killed his father. It is vicious reading for high school students. *Soul Gone Home* is an ironic play about a mother who faked sorrow for her dead son, who came back to life to berate her hypocrisy. Only four pages long and requiring only two characters, this play could easily be presented in the classroom.

The Selected Poems of Langston Hughes (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1959) is a treasure-find for English teachers. His poems are about the things teenagers are concerned about, such as romance, dances, dreams, and jobs. And they are written the way teenagers talk, with modern jazz rhythms and everyday words, sometimes even slang. Furthermore, they are easy to understand—at least the surface meaning is simple. From the teacher's standpoint, they are perfect for illustrating the basic principles of poetry—compression and the connection between metrics and meaning.

Hughes has a number of very short sketches which, haiku-like, compress a mood into a three- or four-line picture. Among the poems of this type are "One," "Garden," "Troubled Woman," "Sea Calm," "Luck," "Ennui," "My People," and "Suicide's Note."

Another group of poems develops a mood through rhythmic patterns and evocative words. Poems of this type are "Trumpet Player," "Drum," "The Weary Blues," and many sections from *Montage of a Dream Deferred* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1951, o.p.), especially "Dream Boogie."

One of Hughes' major themes is the lost dream or the ruined life. Each of the following poems catches the tragedy of the Negro experience in America. "As I Grow Older" is a long poem that shows how a dream flees from color. "Dream Variations" shows the poet's longing to express and enjoy his racial heritage. "Litany" is a haunting poem that accuses even heaven of having no love. "Vagabonds," "Delinquent," and "Troubled Woman" show people who have finally been destroyed. "Mother to Son" gives advice to one who must face a world of trouble. "To Be Somebody" again pictures the almost hopeless dream.

Hughes also has several poems about the American dream: "Freedom's Plow," "I, Too, Sing America," and "Let America Be America Again."

"The Negro Speaks of Rivers" is one of his most beautiful and most moving poems telling the history of the Negro race in the rivers it has lived near.

Montage of a Dream Deferred is an experimental book showing sketches of Harlem life in bop rhythm. The poem can be used as one long selection, or the shorter poems can be used separately. The main theme of all the poems is the tragedy of lost dreams. Among the selections that might be most effective are "Freedom Train," "Boogie: 1 A.M.," "Deferred," and "Harlem."

The Dream Keeper (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1940, o. p.; reissued 1963) is another short collection, an attractive book illustrated by Helen Sewell. Again, all poems are good for high school students, but the most effective might be "The Dream Keeper" and "Dreams."

POST DEPRESSION WRITERS

The Depression of the 1930's brought an end to the Negro Renaissance, but it seems to have begun a period of significant fiction. The hard times of the Depression hit the Negro hardest, and writers became concerned simply with the problems of survival rather than with cultural expression. The writing of this period did not center so much on freedom as on the frustration of the Negro in the South or in the industrial North. Many of these writers have much in common with the naturalistic writers of the early part of the century. Like the naturalists they emphasized the control of man by his environment.

Their thematic concern with violence and sordid environments might make most of these novels inappropriate for high school, though these factors make them very interesting for adolescents. Several of these books, particularly *Native Son,* are among the best writings by Negro authors.

WILLIAM ATTAWAY (1912–)

William Attaway has written two novels, *Blood on the Forge* and *Let Me Breathe Thunder,* which tell of the disintegration of Negro folk culture with the migration to the industrial North. *Blood on the Forge* (New York: Doubleday, Doran, 1941, o. p.) the better of the two novels, is the story of three brothers who fled the oppression of the South to a Northern industrial city and gradually degenerated. *Blood on the Forge* involves much sex and violence, but like most naturalistic novels, it has a profound theme and can be used with students who are mature enough to look for ideas and not just sensationalism.

RICHARD WRIGHT (1908-1960)

Richard Wright is the first Negro to be recognized as an outstanding American novelist. *Native Son* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1940) is without doubt one of the important American novels of the period. It is also without question a book which teenagers could easily become involved with. However, it is also a very violent book with no attempt to hide sex, violent language, or hate. Immature students might find the book harmful, but mature students with good guidance would find the study very profitable. Almost the culmination of American naturalism, *Native Son* provides a thorough study of society's stranglehold on an individual. The book holds society responsible for Bigger Thomas' destruction just as clearly as society held Bigger responsible for Mary's death. The Communists provide an excellent mouthpiece for Wright's denunciation of society, and the mobs give a demonstration of society's corruptness.

Native Son deals with the problems a Negro had attaining manhood in a society that conspired against him. The story begins by showing the difficulty of achieving normal human relations in the squalor of a Chicago slum. Bigger Thomas had what appeared amazing luck when he got a job as a chauffeur with a wealthy family. However, in fear and confusion, he accidentally killed the daughter. He tried to escape, but was caught and tried for murder. The events seem to be a long nightmare over which Bigger himself had little, if any, control.

Uncle Tom's Children (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1940) consists of four horror stories about the plight of Negroes in the South. Of the eight major Negro characters, one was burned alive, four were shot, one was raped, and one was severely beaten. The Negroes, pressed by circumstances into crime, were punished by the whites, who appeared to be looking for Negroes to torture. The first three stories have too much violence and too little character or theme development to have much value in the high school. "Fire and Cloud," the last story, which has possibilities for classroom use, is the story of a preacher who led his people in a Communist-inspired march. Although the situation involves violence, the story has good character development.

Eight Men (New York: Avon Books, 1961, o. p.) is a collection of short stories and novelettes. Several of these might be useful in high school because they are shorter and deal less with violence than most of his other works.

"The Man Who Lived Underground" is a nightmarish story strikingly similar in both symbolism and mood to *Invisible Man*. "The Man Who Saw the Flood" shows how nature and white men gang up to destroy the Negroes' chances. "Man of All Work" is an exciting story about a man who was so desperate for work he dressed in woman's clothes. The other stories in the collection are powerful literature, full of symbolism and imagination, but they are too strong for most high school students.

Black Boy (London: Victor Gollancz, 1945), Wright's autobiography, is one of the bleakest accounts of the effects of poverty and prejudice on a child. Wright's vivid memories include fantastic events: burning the house down at the age of four, being beaten almost to the point of death by his parents, being a drunkard at the age of six, and always being hungry. From this revelation, it is easy to see how Wright developed his philosophy of suffering and fate. After all, everything in his environment conspired to keep him from his manhood. Not only did the white people force him to be obsequious, but his own people, out of fear, begged him to endure insult and even kept him down themselves. Yet he maintained a remarkable integrity, refusing to compromise his own worth. It is this integrity and courage that should make *Black Boy* an outstanding challenge for teenagers. It is certainly a fast-moving story, and though it has a lot of sordid detail, it is not simply sensational. It could be a very valuable study for more mature students.

ANN PETRY (1911–)

Ann Petry is a versatile writer who has written juvenile fiction as well as adult fiction and has written about whites as well as Negroes. One of her novels, *A Country Place,* is about white people.

The Street (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1946, o. p.) shows the Negro counterpart of Sister Carrie or Jennie Gerhardt. Like Jennie and Carrie, Lutie Johnson was trapped in an environment from which escape was hopeless, and Lutie also had a young son whom she wanted to see grow up right. Unlike Jennie and Carrie, she refused to yield to the men who offered her escape. But for Lutie virtue was not rewarded, as one of her spurned suitors vengefully tricked her son into crime. Finally she killed one of the men who had been molesting her.

The Street is strong reading for high school students, but especially for many white students it could be educational. Negro students may not need to know any more about the hopelessness and despair of ghetto life, but white students who consider poverty to be a result of personal weakness need to read such a book to give them a more balanced view.

RALPH ELLISON (1914–)

Invisible Man (New York: Random House, Inc., 1952), like

Moby Dick, has the groping, nightmarish quality of a man trying to comprehend the confusion of myth, experience, and inner reactions that control his life. The symbols of oppression—invisibleness, the forbidden white woman, the leering note that says "keep that Nigger-boy running," and loss of manhood—appear and reappear as in a nightmare. The bizarre plot that seems half real, half dream creates a deep sense of disillusionment.

Invisible Man unmasks the various kinds of escape the Negro might seek to keep from dealing honestly with his heritage. Escape into the middle class proved to be fraudulent in the experiences at the Negro college. Later in the book, escape into Communism proved just as hopeless. Throughout the book there is a groping for meaning, for a way of becoming visible.

Although one of the greatest novels by a Negro author, *Invisible Man* is not appropriate for most high school students. The language is earthy, and there are several scenes that are very raw, especially a rape scene and the castration dream at the end. An even more serious drawback for the high school student is that the book is very difficult. *Invisible Man* requires the same ability to comprehend symbolism and myth that Faulkner or T. S. Eliot requires, and not all high school students have this ability.

WILLIAM A. OWENS (1905–)

Walking on Borrowed Land (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Co., Inc., 1950, o. p.) is the tragic story of Mose Ingram, a poor Mississippi teacher who went to the University of Chicago and then returned south to Columbus, Oklahoma, as principal, determined to raise the standards of his people. He soon became disillusioned as he found that his eight-teacher school actually had four unqualified women and four students as teachers. None of the students qualified for high school, and the white community had made maid and porter training the main curriculum.

In addition, personal problems threatened him as he learned the truth of the lady preacher's prophesy that he would have to rear three sons if one was to survive. Mose continued to fight, but helplessly, as his wife fell into a shouting, superstitious religion, his son Thomas tried to fight against the whites, and his son Robert became involved with alcohol, jazz, marijuana, and women. When Thomas was killed for sassing white folk and Robert ran off to Chicago with a schoolteacher, the tragedy seemed impossible to bear, but Mose continued working with his school and his final son.

The quiet but amazing strength of Mose Ingram reminds the reader of the classic tragic figures who fought against the gods controlling the universe. The novel is well written, and high school students should find it interesting and closely related to some of their own problems.

CONTEMPORARY WRITERS

The search for identity, so powerfully developed in *Invisible Man,* is the characteristic obsession of the modern Negro writer. Self-knowledge is one of the basic themes of all great literature; yet few writers have searched and probed into themselves so painfully and so relentlessly as the modern Negro writer does. It is this painful, probing quality that gives modern Negro literature its power and its universality. Yet few of the novels or novelists currently known really can be called great. There is a certain adolescent quality in most of them. Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun* and James Baldwin's works are perhaps the closest to maturity. Most of the others are very self-conscious, autobiographical first or second novels. Yet their very immaturity might make these books particularly relevant for adolescents who themselves are experimenting with life. These new Negro writers are exciting also because they are experimenting technically. Several experiment with different mediums, trying to bring, not always successfully, poetic awareness to the novel. Lorraine Hansberry and Melvin Tolson have died, several others seem to have disappeared, and it is too soon to see which of those remaining will develop into great writers. One can hope, however, that at least a few will continue to speak and to be heard.

JAMES BALDWIN (1924–)

James Baldwin is the outstanding modern Negro writer and one of the outstanding modern American writers. Although his novels deal with taboo subjects like homosexuality, miscegenation, and sexual perversion, they have a remarkable honesty and integrity. Baldwin's power lies in his ability and willingness to penetrate the mask of hypocrisy which all men wear and force them to face themselves. Baldwin's characters face painful, progressive self-revelation, and his writing is so powerful that it forces the readers to identify with the characters so that they recognize the hidden and, sometimes, taboo emotions as their own.

Go Tell It on the Mountain (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, Inc., 1953) is his first novel. In this story, John, a teenage boy, was torn between his desire to be saved and his desire to be a regular teenager. Compounding his problem were his resentment against his self-righteous father and his dislike of his obviously favored brother. His struggles within himself were further dramatized by flashbacks into the lives of his aunt Florence, his father, Gabriel, and his mother, Elizabeth. As their soul-searchings go on, the reader gains insight into John, who was not actually Gabriel's son, but the son of Richard, who died before he could marry Elizabeth. Gabriel also fell from his holiness and fathered an illegitimate child, who later died. John finally left the church, hoping to lead a life of holiness but aware of the suffering that must be borne by the Negro.

The character development is excellent. The technique of using flashbacks to show each character's history and thoughts in the emotion-packed church service is very successful. The interest level is high, for there is continual action and a good build-up of suspense. However, poor readers might have trouble following the story and keeping the characters straight. The content is very worthwhile, showing an adolescent's struggle to find himself and deal with family, religion, and society. Of Baldwin's novels this is probably the most appropriate for high school students.

Nobody Knows My Name (New York: The Dial Press, Inc., 1961) is a collection of essays on topics including the thoughts of an American Negro expatriot, life in Harlem ghetto, and segregation in North and South. There are also essays on Faulkner, Bergman, Wright, and Mailer.

The style is sensitive and vivid. Baldwin's honesty about himself brings us a penetrating understanding of people. Baldwin lays bare the human psyche in all of its contradictions. At the heart of the essays is every man's search for identity—a search which mature students can identify with. The essays fall into several groups: "The Discovery of What It Means to Be an American" and "Princes and Powers" are both on a high intellectual level. "Fifth Avenue Uptown," "East River Downtown," "A Fly in the Buttermilk," "Notes for a Hypothetical Novel," and "Nobody Knows My Name" are more readable, narrative essays about segregation.

Blues for Mr. Charlie (New York: The Dial Press, Inc., 1964), a play about the trial of a man who murdered a Negro, has about as much violence as most mature high school students can take. Richard, who had returned home from the North and refused to submit to the indignities of segregation, was murdered by Britten, whose wife Richard had insulted. The major part of the play deals with the reactions of various people to the crime and the unjust trial that followed. The language is frank and direct and some of the scenes are extremely bitter. Three of my students read the play. While all agreed they liked it, they all were reluctant to suggest that others be allowed to read it.

Another Country (New York: The Dial Press, Inc., 1962) is a violently shocking novel showing people who refused to be bound by convention. All were seeking to work out their frustrations in relationship to others. Rufus, the talented Negro hero, committed suicide halfway through the book, but his memory haunted all his friends. Vivaldo, Rufus' Italian friend, and Ida, Rufus' sister, eventually found meaning in their love. But Cass and Richard, an apparently happily married couple, finally faced the disintegration of their marriage. Eric, a homosexual, gave comfort to everyone and tried to find love himself. In all the bitterness and suffering, there was a desire to tear off the masks and live freely and honestly as human beings.

WILLIAM DEMBY

Beetlecreek (New York: Rinehart and Co., 1950, o. p.; reissued New York: Avon Books, 1967) is one of the best books by a major Negro author for mature high school students.

Though it has some violence and sex, it is not full of hatred and does not dwell on evil. The situation is developed with considerable artistry.

The story revolves around three characters. Johnny was a young boy from Pittsburgh who struggled between his desire to be a part of the gang and his desire to do right. Johnny's uncle, Diggs, felt trapped in Beetlecreek and wanted to escape to the North. Bill Trapp, an old white man who had been a hermit for fifteen years, finally decided he wanted human companionship. When Bill, attempting to become part of the community, invited some little girls of both races to his house for a picnic, he was accused of molesting them. But neither Johnny nor Diggs, who had been his friends, stood up for him. Johnny gave in to his desire to be a part of the gang and burned the old man's house, and Diggs deserted the village for Detroit and left his wife for an old college sweetheart.

Beetlecreek is a unified book. Characters, action, style, and symbol all develop the tragedy of men who lack the courage to be. Like Baldwin, Demby forces his reader to face honestly the weakness within himself.

The Catacombs (New York: Pantheon Books, Inc., 1965), Demby's latest novel, is a significant experimental novel, but because of its extremely difficult style it is not suitable for most high school students. Set in Italy, it is an unusual mixture of fantasy, newspaper reports, and true experience mixed in what the author calls cubistic time. Reading it is almost a psychedelic experience.

WILLIAM MELVIN KELLEY (1937–)

William Melvin Kelley is an outstanding young Negro writer. His *A Drop of Patience* (Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1965) is a portrait of a blind musician. The story begins when the boy was six years old and continues into his adulthood, showing his search for identity in his music, his marriage, and his love affairs; the story concludes with a nervous breakdown. Kelley's brilliant aural and tactile imagery make the blindness seem real.

Dancers on the Shore (Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1964) is a collection of short stories that generally cluster around a middle-class doctor's family. The book could be studied as one loosely connected narrative or the stories could be taken individually. The particularly valuable stories are these: "Enemy Territory"—a small boy learned to stand up for himself after he heard a story about his grandfather; "A Visit to Grandmother"—the little boy observed his father returning to the home of his grandmother whom he had neglected since he became well-to-do; "Connie"—the pregnant daughter struggled with her conscience and her family's pride; "Brother Carlyle"—a lower-class family's sibling rivalries were acted out, in this case by trying to burn the younger child alive; "The Life You Save"—Peter, from the middle-class family, tried to help Mance, from the lower-class family, but was successful only when he lost his middle-class values. All of these stories are of high literary quality and should be of interest to high school students.

A Different Drummer (New York: Bantam Books, Inc., 1962, o. p.) tells how one day all the Negroes in a mythical Southern state repudiated their society and left. Tucker Caliban, descendant of an African who broke away from slavery, started the exodus by quietly putting salt on his land, burning his house, and leaving. Behind him was a village of confused white people, many of whom thought themselves his friends. To six of them and one Northern Negro, Tucker's leaving was especially significant; they struggled to find the meaning of his action and thus began to understand more of themselves. Tucker's courage had freed them to be human beings. However, another group, unable to understand, lynched the only Negro remaining in the city.

A Different Drummer is a remarkable book and a thought-provoking one. Instead of emphasizing racial conflict it deals with man's need to be a man. The writing is of very high quality, and character development is particularly outstanding. There is a strong sense of history that gives this book significance. It is an excellent book for high school students.

JOHN A. WILLIAMS

John Williams, a graduate of Syracuse University, has written three novels, *Night Song, The Angry Ones,* and *Sissie.* His work has appeared in a number of avant-garde publications.

Sissie (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, Inc., 1963) opens as Sissie's two children, Iris and Ralph, sped toward her deathbed. Both of the two had spent their lives trying to overcome the scars left on their personalities by their childhood of poverty. Iris had become a successful entertainer, but her private life was empty. She had never been given much love because her mother pretended that she was another man's child to spite her father. Ralph, who became a successful playwright, had gone through psychiatric treatment to try to overcome the pain left by the violent quarrels of his parents. Finally, the terrible struggles which Sissie herself had to face to survive were revealed.

Sissie is of better than average literary quality. The character analysis, as Iris and Ralph explore their past to explain the present, is quite effective. The book is rather depressing and includes some sex and violence, but on the whole, it has a positive approach, with the characters fighting to overcome their problems. Switching of scenes and changing of points of view are sometimes confusing, but all this finally works into a pattern as the characters themselves put together the pieces of their background in preparation for a new life.

CHESTER HIMES (1909–)

The Third Generation (New York: New American Library, 1954) probes the psychological problems of a middle-class Negro family. The mother was very light skinned and resented the fact that she must live with Negroes. The father was very dark and, though he was a college professor, was never able to gain the respect of his wife. Tragedy seemed to plague the family as one son, William, was blinded in an accident and the younger son, Charles, was injured at work.

A very well-written book, *The Third Generation* is cohesive, showing the deterioration of the family and Charles' attempt to build a new life. Like *Sissie* it develops the theme that the children must work out the psychological problems of their parents.

Other works by Chester Himes include *If He Hollers Let Him Go, Lonely Crusade,* and *Cast the First Stone.*

HERBERT SIMMONS (1930–)

Corner Boy (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1957, o. p.), a Houghton Mifflin Literary Fellowship Award winner, centers on Jake Adams, who had become top cat on the corner. He had the fanciest car, sharpest clothes, and the prettiest girls in that section of Chicago, and nobody knew that he got his money by pushing dope. He tried to make a successful life, even by following his girlfriend to college, but he refused to give up the easy money of the rackets. Eventually it seemed as if everyone he touched ended in tragedy; finally he went to jail himself. But he knew no other way of life and planned to return to the corner when he was released.

Written in the language of the corner, *Corner Boy* is sometimes a little difficult for a "square" to translate. The action is rapid and there is plenty of excitement. Characters are fairly well developed. The contrast between Jake the hustler and his father is quite good. There is some depth in the development of this conflict. The plot is well constructed, as Jake gets himself deeper and deeper into trouble, still thinking that he is on top. The atmosphere and color of street life are portrayed well.

Herbert Simmons is also author of *Man Walking on Eggshells.*

J. SAUNDERS REDDING (1906–)

J. Saunders Redding's novel, *Stranger and Alone* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1950, o. p.), is a most tragic novel. It deals with the empty world of the "white man's nigger." The hero, or antihero, Shelton Howdon, the son of a Negro woman and a white man, was born in isolation. Raised in an orphanage, Howden worked his way through college up to a position as a professor in college, but he was raised without love and never developed the capacity to feel for other people. Instead, he learned the techniques of getting ahead in a white man's world—of playing dumb when asked to play dumb. Eventually he sold out his people, with almost no sympathy.

Stranger and Alone shows the destructive effects of racial discrimination from an unusual angle—from the viewpoint of the Negro who does manage to get ahead. It would make an interesting comparison with *Black Boy* or another book which shows the struggle from the bottom.

Stranger and Alone is not an outstanding novel. The characters tend a little toward caricature—they are too exaggerated and seem to lack basic human feelings—though it might be argued that this is the point the book makes. Still, a person who can walk out of the room while his roommate is dying, who can marry one girl, with no regrets, while he is sexually involved with another, is a little unbelievable. Dr. Posey, the sarcastic racial superiority preacher, resident Wimbush, the controller of all the Negroes in the state, and his sex-crazed daughter also seem a little caricatured. Character development of Howden, however, is excellent. The progressive development of his betrayal is very well done.

JOHN OLIVER KILLENS (1916–)

John Oliver Killens' novel, *And Then We Heard the Thunder* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1963), is one of the outstanding examples of the angry new Negro. It deals with Solomon Saunders' progressive disillusionment with white society and his willingness, therefore, to stand up for his race. Saunders, who began as a young man who planned to get ahead, entered the army during World War II. However, he soon found that the price for success was too much sacrifice of his manhood and self-respect, and though he struggled to accept the humiliation quietly, he gradually asserted himself more and more.

Saunders' inner struggle to find himself and his place is quite valid and meaningful and very well developed. It should help explain the Black Power movement to those who do not understand it. With war, fights, and love affairs, the plot is certainly exciting. A teacher should definitely look at this book before assigning it; students may be more easily offended by the language of this book than most of the others reviewed here.

PAULE MARSHALL (1929–)

In *Brown Girl, Brownstones* (New York: Random House, Inc., 1959), Paule Marshall shows some of the special problems of the Barbadian immigrant. The adolescent's search for identity was especially difficult for Selina Boyce for many reasons. She was a Barbadian Negro and had to face the race problem. There was a family conflict between her pleasure-loving father and her business-minded mother. Then there were the normal problems of adolescence—development of friendships, acceptance of sex, and finding a career.

Brown Girl, Brownstones is a well-written book, and the development of character is the strongest asset. Selina herself was a very complex young lady, and her progressive self-understanding, particularly the understanding of her relationship to her mother, was sensitive and realistic. But even the minor characters—Suggie, the voluptuous worshipper of the body; Miss Mary, the old white lady who refused to move or to die; the mother, who gained her property but lost the trust of her daughter; and Deighton, the father, who dreamed instead of facing reality—are lively and exciting. Less mature students may not find the book appealing because it does not have a lot of action; there are several minor climaxes instead of one major one. However, more mature and sensitive students should find that the book deals with a number of significant and relevant problems—the race situation, middle-class vs. lower-class values, immigrant problems, development of moral standards, and intra-family conflicts. This is an excellent book for class discussions.

JULIAN MAYFIELD (1928–)

The Long Night (New York: Vanguard Press, Inc., 1958) tells of a long, frightening night spent by a little boy in New York City. It reveals the tensions, loss of dreams, and fears a child must face in the ghetto. The father, Paul, tried to instill pride in his sons but failed to show strength and manliness. The mother, Mae, wanted love and a good home and was impatient with Paul who wanted to study law. The disintegration of the family and of Paul and Mae individually is shown in Steely's memories as he traveled around the city trying to get back the $27.00 he had been robbed of.

This is a powerful portrayal of Negro family life in the ghetto showing both strength and tragedy. The style reflects the simplicity of a ten-year-old boy, but the depth of a mature artist. In *The Long Night,* as in *A Raisin in the Sun,* the laboring love, the dead dreams, and the desperate struggle of a Negro family reach the universal problems of all men. The characters are not only Negroes struggling against whites but men struggling for life and handicapped by white supremacy. *The Long Night* is not a great book for those who can respond to deeper literary works, but it is an outstanding book for adolescents or average adults.

LORRAINE HANSBERRY (1930-1965)

In my two years of teaching, my students have worn out at least fifteen copies of *A Raisin in the Sun* (New York: Random House, Inc., 1959). I have used it to entice my reluctant readers and have not yet found one who did not like it. Memories of the movie often kindle their interest, but students are soon enthralled in the reading. After all, it is the only book most of them have ever seen that deals with modern, urban Negroes. Here are characters that Negro students can identify with, and all of them are magnificently strong and alive. Walter, the husband and son, was fighting for his manhood against a mother who still treated him as a child, a wife that did not believe in him, a community that still called him a boy, and Negro friends that were ready to hustle him out of his money. Mama was a strong, proud pioneer woman who had held the family together, but saw it crumbling about her. Ruth, Walter's wife, was just a woman who wanted to raise her children right and Beneatha, Walter's sister, was a young intellectual who wanted to escape by becoming a doctor or marrying an African.

A Raisin in the Sun is one of the better recent Broadway plays and is by far the best work about Negroes available for high school students. Both white and Negro students should find it a thrilling and enlightening experience. There are few books for adolescents so full of life.

LOUIS PETERSON

Take a Giant Step (New York: Samuel French, 1952, o. p.) is a play which initiates a boy into the mysteries of sex and race.

Spence had grown up in a white, middle-class neighborhood, separated from members of his race and members of the opposite sex. When his teacher made insulting remarks about Negroes, he rebelled and was suspended from school. He ran away to a tavern in the Negro part of town and looked for a prostitute, but lacked the courage to carry out his intentions. In the second act, he propositioned the maid, and apparently was successful. He broke with his former white friends, who had become cool to him, and began to concentrate all his efforts on going to college.

The play shows an adolescent's bungling attempts to find himself and maintain his integrity. It also shows the problems that can arise when a family tries hard to get ahead; it may fall apart. This play is a very good portrayal of the adolescent and his problems.

WILLARD MOTLEY (1912–) AND FRANK YERBY (1916–)

While most Negro writers have probed their Negro heritage for their writing material, two significant writers have ignored it. Willard Motley in his successful novel *Knock on Any Door* (New York: Signet Books) attempts to deal with the problems of assimilation and identity, but without reference to the Negro.

Frank Yerby, a popular, prolific writer, escaped Negro life by writing historical novels. Among his novels are *The Foxes of Harrow, The Vixens, The Golden Hawk, Pride's Castle, Floodtide, A Woman Called Fancy*, and *The Saracen Blade.*

MARGARET WALKER (1915–)

Margaret Walker's poetry is simple, direct and very good for slower students. Most of her work affirms pride in her heritage as a Negro. Among her poems that might be used in class are these: "Molly Means," a spooky narrative about a conjure woman; "Harriet Tubman," a long poem (5 pages) about the conductor of the Underground Railroad. Written in a folk rhythm, it makes a good choral reading. "For My People" is a poem praying for a new earth; this poem does not use rhyme, rhythm, or other traditional devices.

Margaret Walker's novel *Jubilee* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin

Company, 1966) recounts with pride the lives of her ancestors under slavery. *Jubilee* is primarily the story of Vyry who was able to be strong and optimistic even as a slave. The novel tells of Vyry's life as a slave and her attempts to build a home for her family after they were emancipated by the Civil War.

A Houghton Mifflin Literary Fellowship Book, *Jubilee* is well written. Though its length might be discouraging (495 pages), it is fast-moving and written in a very readable style.

OWEN DODSON (1914–)

Owen Dodson is primarily a poet. His poetry collection *Powerful Long Ladder* (1946, o.p.) is difficult, but good. His poetry can be found in most anthologies of Negro literature.

His novel, *Boy at the Window* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Young, 1951, o. p.), is the sensitive story of a young boy growing up in a poverty-stricken home. His mother, paralyzed from a stroke, ate cheap, inadequate food so the children were able to have something more substantial. The father struggled to provide enough money at his low-paying job, but lost his pride as he failed. The older brother got into trouble, and the older sister was made to sacrifice marriage to help her family. The main events in Coin's life were his religious conversion, the death of his mother, and his trip to Washington to stay with his blind beggar uncle.

Boy at the Window, though written from a child's point of view, is an adult book. Its interest and effect come through the development of ideas with Coin's impressions. The excellent character portraits, especially of people in the neighborhood and the church, add to the interest. However, there is little action and not really much plot, so probably only the more sensitive and mature students will find it interesting. It is a well-written book that could be valuable for adolescents, but it is not likely to be very appealing to them. One has the impression that Dodson is too much a poet trying to be a novelist.

GWENDOLYN BROOKS (1917–)

Gwendolyn Brooks is the only Negro poet to win the Pulitzer Prize. Her collection *The Bean Eaters* (New York: Harper and

Bros., 1950, o. p.) is quite difficult, but could be used with advanced students. Some of the most appropriate poems are the following: "The Explorer," which tells of a youth searching for peace while confronted by all the choices he must make; "My Little 'Bout Town Girl," a sensitive poem about a cheap, painted girl; "We Real Cool," a clever, "hip" poem about dropouts that would be appropriate for any level. Other collections of poetry by Gwendolyn Brooks are *A Street in Bronzeville, Annie Allen, Bronzeville Boys and Girls.*

Gwendolyn Brooks' novel is *Maude Martha* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1951, o. p.). It is the kind of novel one would perhaps expect a poet to write because of its sensitive, poetic style. *Maude Martha* is a series of episodes in the life of a Negro girl. Maude was not a pretty girl like her sister, and she worried about being able to keep her handsome husband. Students may at first have trouble with the somewhat fragmented style; the episodes are not connected and at first appear unrelated. However, the reader soon becomes accustomed to the technique. *Maude Martha* has little plot and little action except the birth of the baby, which is described in some detail. However, the characters are developed with great insight, and the little vignettes are very human and occasionally humorous. *Maude Martha* would probably not be a popular book for young people but could be enjoyed by the more sensitive readers.

MELVIN B. TOLSON (1898-1966)

Though Tolson by age should fit in one of the earlier periods of literature, he was avant-garde and ahead of most contemporary poets. His collection *Rendezvous with America* (New York: Dodd, Mead, & Co., 1944, o. p.) is quite suitable for high school students. The title poem, "Rendezvous with America," tells about the American dream of freedom and democracy through the history of the nation. The second group of poems, "Woodcuts for Americana," gives short sketches of various people around America, for example, an old farmer, Michael, who is trying to root the tares out of his field.

"Dark Symphony" uses a symphonic form to tell of the contribution of the Negro to American history. It is a fairly difficult poem and would probably need explanation from the teacher, but it is significant and provides a surprising amount of Negro history.

The other sections of the book, "Song for Myself," "Of Men and Cities," "The Idols of the Tribe," and "Tapestries of Time," could be used with high school students but are not as interesting.

Libretto for the Republic of Liberia (New York: Twayne Publishers, Inc., 1953) is a lengthy, very difficult poem, with musical rhythm, which praises Negro history and culture.

The Harlem Gallery, Book I: The Curator (New York: Twayne Publishers, Inc., 1964) has received high praise from critics. Unfortunately it is far too difficult for most high school students and many teachers.

ANTHOLOGIES OF NEGRO LITERATURE

There are several excellent collections of Negro poetry and a few of prose. Several of these have been mentioned before in connection with various authors. Some Negro writers that have not been mentioned earlier do appear here because their works, not readily available, are included in these anthologies. For each of the anthologies, I have tried to give a summary of the general contents and have mentioned the writers and their works that have not been dealt with earlier.

Herbert Hill, ed. *Soon, One Morning: New Writings by American Negroes 1940-1962.* New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1963.

This collection of writings by Negro authors includes essays, fiction, and poetry. Most of the fiction selections are from the novels that have been reviewed elsewhere in this paper. Most of the useful poetry is also available in other collections.

One clever short story not reviewed elsewhere is "Rat Joiner Routs the Klan" by Ted Poston, a humorous story about how the Negro community tried to stop the town theater from showing *Birth of a Nation.* It is a humorous treatment of segregation, but the humor never masks the tragedy.

Langston Hughes, ed. *The Best Short Stories by Negro Writers.* Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1967.

The Best Short Stories by Negro Writers includes forty selections representing all of the well-known Negro writers from Chesnutt and Dunbar to James Baldwin and William Melvin Kelley and would therefore be an excellent introduction to Negro authors. All of the works are of excellent quality, but they are adult and somewhat intellectual works. The stories are more the quality that would be found in the *New Yorker* than in a high school collection and many are a little too subtle for the average high school student. Since many deal with adult problems, the teacher would probably want to read most of them before assigning them.

The following stories might be enjoyed by younger high school students. "The Revolt of the Evil Fairies" by Ted Poston deals with color discrimination among Negroes. It is the clever, humorous story of a little boy who was too dark to be the good prince in the school pageant, but who played the evil fairy to the hilt. "Almos' a Man" is a very tragic story of a boy who wanted a gun, and when he got it, accidentally shot a mule. "The Pocketbook Game" by Alice Childress tells of a Negro woman who turned the tables on her suspicious white employer. "The Blues Begins" by Sylvester Leaks shows how a poverty-stricken boy tried to help his family out by stealing, but was reprimanded by his mother and eventually ended up in trouble with the law. "A Long Day in November" by Ernest J. Gaines is a long story, almost fifty pages, about a boy's family problems with his parents almost breaking up. "Junkie Joe Had Some Money" is a frightening story by Ronald Milner about a boy who found out about a murder and lived in mortal fear of the murderers.

More mature students might be interested in the following stories. "Marijuana and a Pistol" by Chester B. Himes is a strange dream-like story of a man under the influence of marijuana who accidentally killed a man. "The Almost White Boy" by Willard Motley is the tragic story of a mulatto who fell in love with a white girl and was cruelly rejected. "Flying Home" by Ralph Ellison is about a Negro flyer, one of the first to break through the race barriers, who was stranded in a Southern white area and in grave danger. "This Morning This Evening So Soon" by James Baldwin tells of a Negro man who was returning to the United States from Paris with a white wife and son and of his fears for his wife and son. "See How They Run" is an inspiring story of a Negro schoolteacher who insisted on trying to help her students and was not discouraged by her cynical fellow workers. "An Interesting Social Study" shows a Negro girl passing for white in a resort town. "The Only Man on Liberty Street" by William Melvin Kelley tells of a white man who tried to buck social opinion and live with his Negro concubine and child. "Red Bonnet" by Lindsay Patterson is about a stubborn old grandmother who refused to cooperate with her daughter or white people and finally burned to death when she was forced off the front of the bus. "Direct Action" by Mike Thelwell is a very funny story about an integrated college group who were forced to get into the civil rights action by integrating the rest rooms at a small department store.

Nick Aaron Ford and H. L. Faggett, eds. *Best Short Stories by Afro-American Writers 1925-1950.* Boston: Meador Publishing Co., 1950, o. p.

It is amazing the difference that fifteen years has made in the quality of the best short stories of Negro, or Afro-American, writers. The stories in this collection are of much lower literary quality than the stories in the Langston Hughes collection. There is a significant difference in the type of stories that predominates in each collection. Most of the stories in the Hughes collection emphasize the psychological development of the character, while most of these stories emphasize plot with a clever, happy ending. Most of them are written in a popular magazine style.

A number of the stories present an optimistic view of the civil rights problem. "No Room in the Inn" by Nick Aaron Ford tells about a white doctor who had the courage to operate on a Negro baby even though the hospital forbade him. "Let the Church Roll On" by Nick Aaron Ford is about a white minister who removed his most generous supporter from the church rolls when she protested the baptism of a Negro boy. Nick Aaron Ford's third story, "One Way to Victory," is about a Negro who beat the segregation forces trying to stop him from becoming an engineer and later from buying a house in an all-white neighborhood. "I Shall Not Be Moved" by Ollie Stewart tells of a Negro lady who beat the Jim

Crow laws by forcing the white people to move to the Jim Crow coach.

Several of the stories are about people who just happen to be Negroes. "Symbol of Courage" by Rolan T. Hamilton tells about a mother who tried to keep her courage up as her boy went to war. James H. Hill's "A Captain Returns" is about a Negro's fight for revenge during Shay's Rebellion. "No Greater Love" by Ollie Stewart is about a wife who tricked her husband into staying home from work on Christmas. "In Common Meter" by Rudolph Fisher shows two jazz bands in Harlem trying to outplay each other to win a lady's love. In "The Killer" by Frank Coggins, the man had to win his lady's little brother as well as the lady. "Life Begins at Forty" tells of a waitress who did a good job but feared she would lose her job since she was getting old. "The Shepherd" by Mark Hyman is about a mother whose new-found faith convinced the magistrate that he should release her son.

Langston Hughes and Arna Bontemps, eds. *The Poetry of the Negro: 1746-1949.* Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1949.

Called "a definitive anthology" on the cover, *The Poetry of the Negro* is quite thorough and for anyone who can afford only one book, it provides the most complete selection. It includes a number of poems mentioned elsewhere in this booklet as well as many poems by lesser-known poets. Among the poets not mentioned before that could be used with teenagers are the following:

> Georgia Douglas Johnson's "Interracial" is an optimistic poem making a plea for racial understanding. "My Little Dreams" is a sentimental poem about dreams that have failed; slower students might enjoy it.
>
> Frank Horne's "On Seeing Two Brown Boys in a Catholic Church" compares the suffering of Negro children with the suffering of Christ. "Kid Stuff" mocks Christmas, but pleads at the end for a return to "Kid Stuff." "Toast" offers congratulations to a person who is complete and beautiful—except for soul.

Langston Hughes, ed. *New Negro Poets: U.S.A.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1964.

This is a significant collection of verse for teachers who want to keep their students abreast of current literary events. Most of the poets included in this collection are not in other anthologies and have not published their own books. On the other hand, they are so new that it is difficult to tell who will develop into important writers.

As is true of most modern poetry, these poems are rather difficult and most of them could be used only with more advanced classes. The following poems might be enjoyed by high school students.

"Love Song" by Samuel Allen consigns the faithless lover to hell in a clever, ironic poem in a traditional form. "The Fall Shall Sit in Judgment" by Audre Lorde gives the traditional seasonal love imagery a new ironic twist. Mari Evans' "If There Be Sorrow" expounds on the lost dream in a beautiful, short poem.

Lucy Smith in "The Face of Poverty" evokes tragic images of poverty. "Love" by Tom Dent uses concise language and color to create a haunting picture. "Shrine to What Should Be" by Mari Evans uses the contrast between dream and reality. LeRoi Jones' "Preface to a Twenty Volume Suicide Note" gathers minor incidents to build an overpowering emotional impact.

Countee Cullen, ed. *Caroling Dusk.* New York: Harper and Bros., 1927, o. p.

Caroling Dusk is a fairly complete anthology of the older poets but does not cover as many of the recent poets as *The Poetry of the Negro.* Among the poets *Caroling Dusk* includes that have not been mentioned earlier are the following.

Sterling Brown's "Challenge" is about two lovers who said that they would not be separated, even by time and death, but they were. "Return" is about going back in boyish wonderment to the peace and beauty of nature.

Clarissa Scott Delany's "Joy" is a light, thrilling poem. "Solace" speaks of the peace of the beauty of nature. "Interim" contrasts the night of weeping and the day of courage. "The Mask" is about a cool detached woman who for an instant lets the mask fall.

Blanche T. Dickinson's "Poem" compares happiness to a fawn and to dawn. "To an Icicle" shows that a delicate person is not pitied, just as the sun does not pity the fragile icicle. "Four Walls" questions whether man really wants freedom or if he would rather be imprisoned.

Joseph S. Cotter, Sr.'s "Rain Music" speaks of rain as God's drumbeat calling for new life. "The Tragedy of Pete" is a narrative about a man who killed a "friend," the man his wife ran off with.

James E. McCall's "The New Negro" is a powerful poem of a strong new Negro looking at the future.

Anne Spencer's "Neighbors" is about the cruelty of neighbors who want a person's soul, and not just his friendship. "Creed" is a modern version of the parable of the sheep and the goats.

Jessie Fauset's "Words, Words" and "La Vie, C'Est La Vie" are both about the failures of love.

Alice Dunbar Delson's "I Sit and Sew" contrasts a woman's useless work with men fighting in battle.

Georgia Johnson's "Old Black Men" is about the men who lose their dreams but live as though they do not care. "I Want to Die While You Love Me" is, of course, a love poem.

Angelina Weld Grimke's "The Eyes of My Regret" sensitively portrays a person haunted by eyes from the past. "Grass Fingers" is a beautiful poem about grass and the inevitability of death. "The Ways of Men" describes how men sway from the path of truth. "Your Hands" is a beautiful, sensuous picture of strong hands of a woman's lover and the protected feeling she has when she is near him.

Charles S. Johnson, ed. *Ebony and Topaz: A Collectanea.* New York: Urban League, 1927.

Ebony and Topaz is a collection of some of the less-known works of the Negro Renaissance by both Negro and white writers. Although most of these selections are outdated, several of them might still interest high school students.

"Jumby" by Arthur Huff Fauset is a voodoo story of a young girl's fantasy. The story is exciting and catches the rhythm and mystery of voodoo but is difficult to follow.

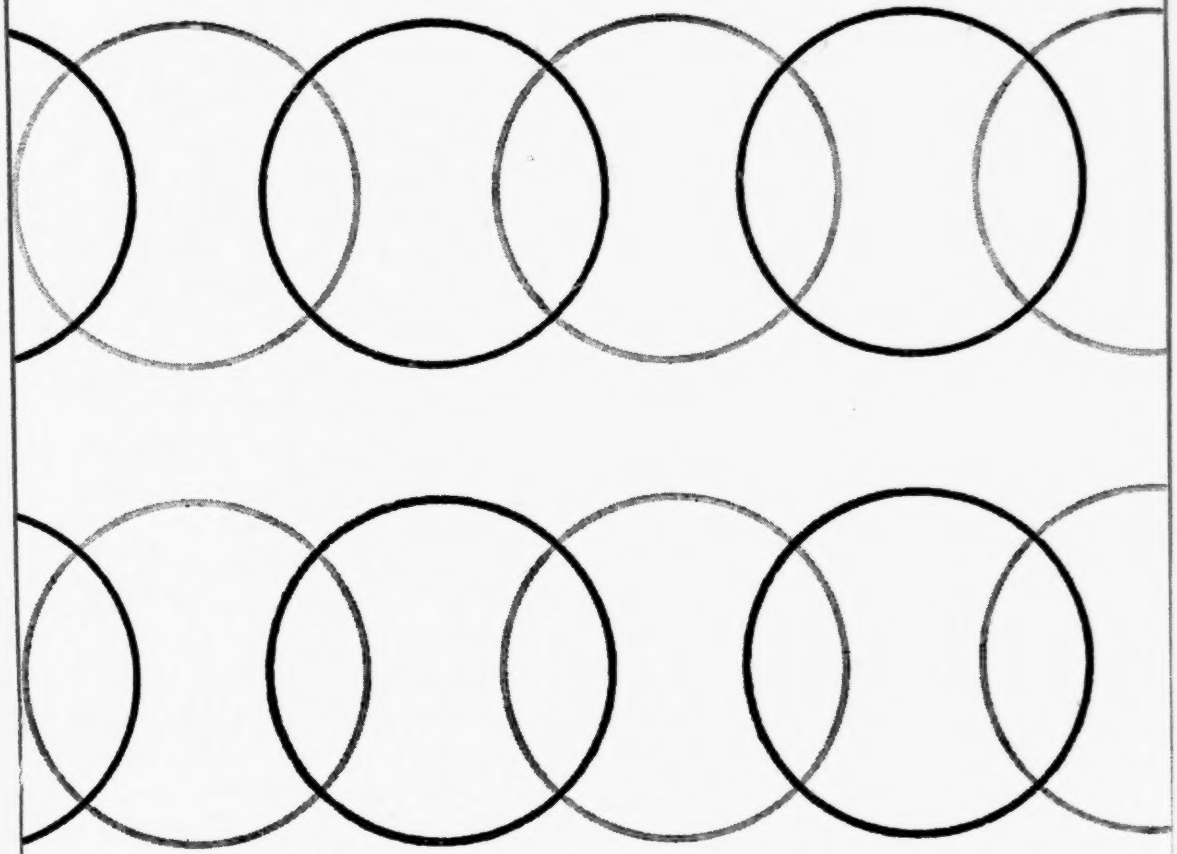
"On the Road One Day, Lord" by Paul Green is a story of a chain gang that is full of hate and anger. The recurring refrain of the work song gives it an exciting rhythm.

"Dusk" by Mae V. Cowdery is a beautiful love poem that could be very effective with high school students. "Divine Afflatus" by Jessie Fauset compares Negro heroes with Bible characters but encourages submission.

"General Drums" by John Matheus is an exciting story about Negro war heroes returning to their home town in the South and one soldier who tried to marry his best friend's widow.

"Eighteenth Street" is a collection of short vignettes of Eighteenth Street in Birmingham describing various interesting characters. It is humorous but not outstanding.

WORKS ABOUT NEGROES



THERE ARE A NUMBER of books about Negroes by white authors. I have made no attempt to include all of the relevant works in this part. However, there are several that deserve notice. Books that did not fit into other parts of this volume are also listed here.

WILLIAM E. BARRETT

THE LILIES OF THE FIELD (New York: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1962) has immediate appeal for high school students since it is easy to read, interesting, and was recently a popular movie.

The story is a simple folk legend. Homer Smith, an exserviceman, was traveling around the country living off the land, when he met four German nuns who were trying to start a school for Spanish boys in the Southwest. After he did some odd jobs for them, the Mother Superior ordered him to build her a church. At first he laughed at the idea and was irritated by her manner, but gradually he became excited by the challenge. After building the church, he disappeared.

The Lilies of the Field has a beauty that both the dull student and the sophisticated reader can respond to. The simple style, the clear theme, and the beautiful symbolism are the result of careful artistry. The characters, especially Homer, who was impetuous and full of life, and Mother Marie Marthe, who had strong faith, are lively and exciting. Besides its good literary qualities, *The Lilies of the Field* teaches important lessons in human relations. It shows that race, nationality, language, and religion are not barriers to men of good faith. One of my slower students wrote: "This book was one of the best book I have read. This book have class. The book seem real as sunshine."

MARY BEECHWOOD

MEMPHIS JACKSON'S SON (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1956) is the story of a poor Southern Negro boy who wanted to become a doctor and his mother, a powerful woman who raised her children alone after her husband's death. Ken survived the poverty of his adolescence, but he almost succumbed to some temptations he met in college. Memphis was full of anguish as she tried to mold her son into a strong man, knowing that she had to watch his struggles helplessly. She watched the problems of the white family for whom she worked with the same helplessness.

Memphis Jackson's Son is conservative on racial issues. The white people in the book were somewhat paternalistic. Though they laughed at Ken's dream of becoming a doctor, they were willing to help him through college and medical school. And the Negroes, though eager to obtain the benefits of education and good employment, were not anxious to challenge the whites for social or political equality. Ken was harmed more by his attempts to get ahead than by his poverty. Like *A Raisin in the Sun* it explores the struggles of the Negro family trying to survive in a hostile environment, and it studies in depth the feelings of the mother and son. The plot is well developed, and the style is sensitive.

SARAH PATTON BOYLE

The white Southerner, as described by Mrs. Boyle, is as much a victim of ignorance as a deliberate perpetrator of crimes. Segregation has made it all but impossible for the white Southerner to understand the feelings and problems of the Negro. In *THE DESEGREGATED HEART* (New York: William Morrow & Co., Inc., 1962), Mrs. Boyle tells of her long, difficult struggle to overcome her heritage of ignorance. Her first problem was to gain enough confidence from the Negroes to get them to tell her the truth. Gradually the problem became one of educating other white people to the new knowledge she had gained. Finally the struggle became an inner one when she was the victim of a hate campaign because of her support of the Negro.

This autobiography would help Negro students understand the psychology of prejudice and therefore combat it more effectively. For white students, the book may be an inspiration for further "desegregation" of their own hearts. This searching biography would make a very good comparison with Will Thomas' *The Seeking.*

MARC CONNELLY

THE GREEN PASTURES (New York: Holt, Rinehart and

Winston, 1935) is a folk play narrating the story of the Bible as a Negro Sunday School class might picture it. Parts are very humorous—the watermelon feast in heaven and Noah pleading for permission to take just a little liquor. However, the overall problem—what God is going to do with his wayward children—is serious and leads to a deeply religious conclusion. Though done with sensitivity, humor, and depth, at the present time this play is objectionable because of its use of the old slave stereotype—the love for watermelon and women and liquor, a certain childishness, and the lively religion are all there. This could be a valuable work if the teacher shows how the stereotype is used to create effects, but if it is taught as genuinely typical of Negro life and ideas it could be quite harmful.

LUCY DANIELS

CALEB, MY SON (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Co., 1956, o. p.) could be called reactionary, for it makes a villain of the civil rights worker and a hero of his Uncle Tom father. However, if students can accept a plot which supports too much of the Southern conservative point of view, this book is a powerful portrayal of the clash between generations and the struggle of the Southern Negro to know what is right in the civil rights revolution.

The members of the Blake family are sensitively portrayed. Asa, the father, had attained a measure of respect in the community and wanted the same for his sons. But Caleb, the oldest son, had become involved in the rights struggle and was even dating a trashy white girl. The struggle split the family causing every member to suffer. Finally Mr. Blake killed Caleb, his son, to keep him from further disgracing the family.

Caleb, My Son is a well-written book. Read objectively, this would be a valuable book. But most Negroes are perhaps not sufficiently detached to appreciate it, and it tends to support superstitions still commonly accepted among white students.

MARTIN B. DUBERMAN

IN WHITE AMERICA (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1964) is a documentary play telling the history of the Negro in

America in the words of various documents, speeches, and letters that portray the sentiments of the people of each period. The six characters alternate in reading the documents or in creating the short dramatic scenes.

The choice of documents and scenes presents a remarkably balanced picture. Both fanatic segregationists and civil rights workers are included among the whites; Uncle Toms and militants are represented among the Negroes. The selections are interesting and keep the play moving.

Primarily a history of discrimination and segregation, *In White America* does not try to emphasize Negro heroes and in this sense is different from the usual Negro history play. However, it makes its point very forcefully. This play leaves room for the individual to develop his own ideas, but it gives the background for a more enlightened action.

Although it would have value for Negro students, the play is really directed toward white people. *In White America* would be very suitable, in fact should be required, in all American history classes.

DU BOSE HEYWARD

PORGY (1925, o. p.), source of the well-known musical adaptation *Porgy and Bess*, is about a crippled beggar's life in the New Orleans slums with Bess, a gambler's woman. Bess struggled to choose between her love for Porgy and her desire for the gambler Crown and the life he represented.

The literary quality of *Porgy* is fairly high. The plot is well constructed and realistic, but the author's technique of skipping long periods of time may present a problem for immature readers. The characters seem quite well developed, though they are sometimes only animated stereotypes.

Porgy deals with a rather deep, mature theme. For more advanced readers, it should help develop an understanding of loyalties and an ability to face oneself and one's limitations realistically. However, some students could become lost in the bizarre characteristics of the culture, which Heyward overemphasizes. Many students simply lose interest in the old-fashioned people.

ELIZABETH KATA

A PATCH OF BLUE (New York: Popular Library, 1961), originally entitled *Be Ready with Bells and Drums,* beats the drums for tolerance. Selina, a blind white girl, had been brought up in degrading circumstances with a prostitute for a mother and a drunken grandfather. Her first friend was a Negro man who was kind to her and rescued her from being forced to become a prostitute.

Characters are vivid, though occasionally exaggerated. At times the style is contrived. But it is a moving, powerful book.

HARPER LEE

TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1960) is a best seller which has recently become quite popular in high schools. The story is written from the point of view of Scout, a little Southern white girl who learned lessons in human relations from watching her father Atticus. Scout first learned simple lessons—like not to make fun of schoolmates because they dress differently. This respect for others developed further when it had to include Boo Radley, who was thought to be crazy. Finally it had to include a Negro man whom the whole town despised because he was accused of raping a white girl. When her lawyer father defended the Negro, Scout had to learn the lesson of courage—the courage to hold up one's head and keep fighting for right against ridicule and even physical danger.

Several mysteries and a murder make *To Kill a Mockingbird* exciting enough to interest adolescents. But its literary qualities, particularly a skillful use of point of view and a well-developed plot, make it a valuable study in literature. Though this book handles the race problem only incidentally, it teaches basic lessons of human relations that are the foundation of good race relations.

RACHEL MADDUX

> Had it been Mr. Loftis or God who had stood so baffled, staring out into space, saying, "How can it be? How can it be that little children cry theirselves to sleep in a man's own house and him not know?"

This cry of a man who tried to do good but suddenly realized the incredible depth of evil expresses the spirit of *ABEL'S DAUGHTER* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1960, o. p.). Molly Demerest, a Northern Yankee, was too innocent and naive to understand the Southern tradition of segregation. Serena Covington, a Southern Negro, understood segregation, but refused to accept it. Drawn together by a love of beauty and hope, the two became fast friends.

Though there is little plot or excitement, Molly keeps up interest with her lively personality and her funny, though tragic, encounters with her poverty-stricken neighbors and her old aristocrat acquaintances. This is an unusual book that shows beauty in simple life and simple people. A remark I once heard about Willa Cather would apply to Rachel Maddux, "She makes goodness appealing."

WARREN MILLER

The wild world of juvenile delinquency in Harlem is the setting for *THE COOL WORLD* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1959). Like *Manchild in the Promised Land,* it capitalizes on the sensationalism of the setting but tries to explore seriously the problems that cause delinquency and the thoughts of the delinquent boy. *The Cool World* shows the disintegration of the family, the peer group pressure, the inner insecurity and the desire for status that led a teenager into crime. It also shows in detail the activities of the gang–hiring a prostitute, pushing dope, and fighting.

Told in the dialect of the Harlem delinquent, the story is often difficult to follow for the uninitiated. Like *The Catcher in the Rye* it is told in the first person from a boy's point of view.

EUGENE O'NEILL

Two of O'Neill's plays, *THE EMPEROR JONES* and *ALL GOD'S CHILLUN GOT WINGS,* deal with Negroes and are appropriate for mature high school students.

The Emperor Jones tells of a Negro who built himself an empire among the superstitious Negroes on a Caribbean island. The play shows him as his subjects began to rebel and he attempted to escape through the jungle, haunted by his past and superstition. Though a powerful play, it is not very effective as a reading assignment because there is little dialogue. Most of the impact comes from stage effects—the beating tom-toms and the appearance of the haunts. This would be an effective play for students to see.

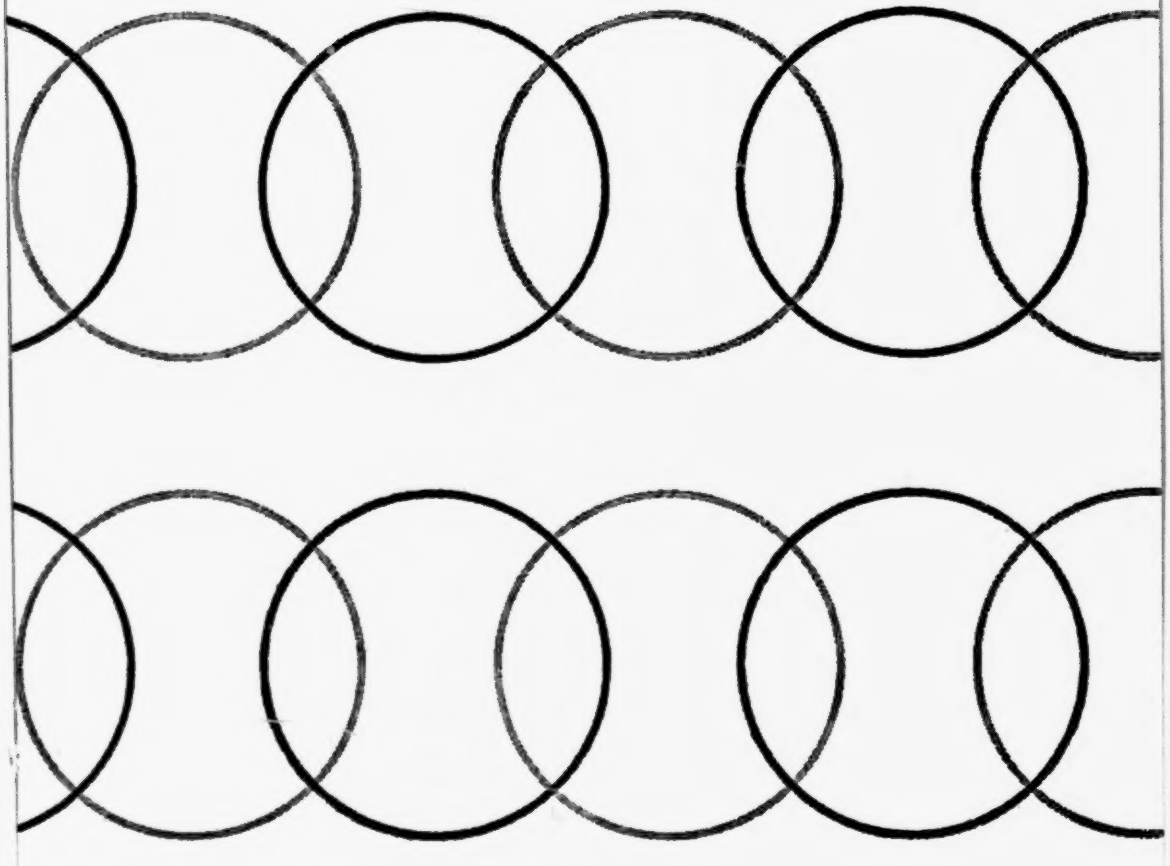
All God's Chillun Got Wings deals with the problem of interracial marriage. Although the protagonists are treated sympathetically, mixed marriage is shown as a failure. At the conclusion Ella was insane and hated the blackness that she thought held her prisoner. Jim had tried to become whiter than white but failed in all his attempts to get ahead.

JEFFERSON YOUNG

A GOOD MAN (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Co. Inc., 1952) concerns Albert, a poor, uneducated tenant farmer, who planned to paint his house white. However, several of the white men in the community concluded that he was acting too uppity for a Negro. Mr. Mathis, the store owner, cut off his credit and tried to intimidate him, but Mr. Tittle, who owned the farm, stood up for Albert's right. At last Louella, his wife, terrified by the threats of the white villagers, killed the calf he was raising to pay for the paint and destroyed his hopes.

A Good Man attempts several literary experiments. It tries to sound realistic by using simple, folk language; instead it sounds childish. Flashbacks and changes in point of view, instead of contributing to the effect, are merely confusing. Some students may resent the portrayal of the Negro as an uneducated person who cannot multiply and whose highest aspiration is to paint his house. On the other hand, the trouble over Albert's attempt to paint his house is one of the most dramatic pictures of the oppression of the Negro available. The book is unlikely to appeal to teenagers, for the action is very slow and sometimes confusing.

THE JUNIOR NOVEL



JUNIOR NOVELS FOR GIRLS, *70*

JUNIOR NOVELS FOR BOYS, *78*

THE BOOKS LISTED HERE as junior novels are written specifically for high school students. They deal with the problems that are peculiar to adolescence such as dating, choosing a career, and participating in high school activities. They are generally easier to read than adult novels and have more emphasis on plot than on psychological problems.

In their dealing with race, junior novels tend to be optimistic. They usually relate specific incidents that high school students are likely to meet, like discrimination in athletics or student activities. Since they describe specific instances of discrimination rather than the cumulative psychological effects of prejudice, junior novels frequently have a happy ending. Those included here can be effective in helping white middle-class adolescents to understand Negro youths, for all show vividly the frustration and resentment of Negro youths when they are subjected to the common types of high school discrimination. Some of these novels may encourage white youths to stop discriminating; at least these books can help make white youths a little more sensitive to the feelings of their Negro classmates.

Dealing as they do primarily with middle-class Negroes in integrated situations and often being written by white authors, junior novels do not reveal the explosive bitterness of the ghetto, the topic of many adult novels. Because junior novels generally hold to middle-class values and taboos—forbidding profane language, mention of sexual intercourse, or episodes of violence—they are unrealistic, or too "nice," at times.

In order to guide the teacher in the selection of books, I have placed a two-word evaluation at the bottom of each annotation in the junior novel and the biography sections. The word on the left is an estimate of the reading level. Those marked *slow* would be for ninth or tenth graders who are classed as slow learners or retarded readers, students who are reading below the ninth grade level. Those marked *average* would be for ninth or tenth graders who are reading on level and for eleventh or twelfth graders who are poor readers. Those marked *advanced* are difficult and require a certain appreciation of literary skill. The second word in the evaluation is my estimate of the book's literary merit as compared with others in the same category.

JUNIOR NOVELS FOR GIRLS

These junior novels for girls generally include some elements of romance, the search for popularity, the development of values, and the choice of career, as well as integration.

Julie's Heritage is by far the best book included here, for it shows the complexity of problems in realistic situations, problems which are worked out by actions and choices of the characters themselves, not by the intervention of fate. *Classmates by Request, The Barred Road*, and *Willow Hill* all take the problem of integration from the white girl's point of view. *Hold Fast to Your Dreams, A Cap for Mary Ellis*, and *Mary Ellis, Student Nurse* are primarily career stories about Negro girls; all three are written less skillfully, have less character development, and depend more on circumstances than the others do. *Whispering Willows* may seem old fashioned to modern girls, and *Mary Jane* may seem too young for high school girls. The Florence Crannell Means books vary greatly in quality and are all discussed together. Books are arranged so that those with similar topics follow each other.

CATHERINE MARSHALL

JULIE'S HERITAGE (New York: David McKay Co., Inc., 1957) definitely has a higher literary quality than most junior novels about Negroes. Julie's character is well developed; her feelings and fears are realistic and clear to the reader.

The story deals with a talented Negro girl in a predominantly white high school and her search for an adequate compromise between completely withdrawing from whites and completely rejecting her own heritage. Having grown up with white girls and unaccustomed to meeting any prejudice in her grade school years, Julie was unprepared for rejection by her former friends when she entered high school. Her hurts were healed a little by her friendship with Marilyn, a Negro girl who knew all about prejudice, and her cousin George, who was completely embittered by his experiences. After she and her boyfriend Dave were barred from a dance at the country club, they almost broke up their relationship because Dave felt he had to fight back, and Julie still did not want to cause trouble. At last she learned how to stand up for her heritage as a Negro but also to stay on good terms with everyone.

Character, plot, and theme are maturely handled in this book. The story deals effectively with the racial problem by showing in the four main Negro characters four possible reactions to prejudice. It also shows how Negroes are affected by the white students who are often thoughtlessly or even deliberately cruel. This is a good book for Negro girls; it could be required for white girls.

AVERAGE—EXCELLENT
(reading level) (literary quality)

ADELE DE LEEUW

THE BARRED ROAD (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1954) tells almost the same story as *Julie's Heritage* but from a white girl's point of view. Sue Trowbridge, a new student at Brookhaven High School, found she had to choose between popularity and her belief in integration. Having refused to give up her friendship with a Negro girl, Sue was in danger of becoming an outcast. Then a Negro family moved next door, and Sue began to work in a Negro community center. As the situation became complicated, however, fate intervened and everyone recognized that Sue was right. Her mother lost her prejudice when a Negro doctor saved Sue's little brother's life. Dave, her boyfriend, became converted by an experience at camp. And the whole school developed a social conscience as a result of a new teacher's course on problems in democracy.

The theme of *The Barred Road* is timely and significant. The problems that Sue confronted, the exclusion of Negroes from social activities and recognition in integrated schools, are quite common. Unfortunately, the solutions are not as simple as the book seems to indicate—problems were met more by fortunate circumstance and platitude than by realistic action and choice. It is still an interesting story and likely to be quite popular.

AVERAGE—VERY GOOD

PHYLLIS A. WHITNEY

Similar to *The Barred Road, WILLOW HILL* (New York: David McKay Co., Inc., 1947) tells of a white girl who fought those who opposed integration. The trouble in *Willow Hill* started when a group of influential citizens, including Val's mother, decided to oppose a new housing project for Negroes. There was plenty of excitement as Val's father was threatened with the loss of his job as coach if he allowed Negroes to play on the team, and a riot threatened when the integrated team lost its first game. Val, too, struggled between her interest in Tony, the son of the leading racist, and her ideals. She was hurt when a Negro was chosen for the job of editor of the paper, for she had hoped to be selected.

In literary quality, *Willow Hill* is a little above average. The characters are lively, though stereotypes. The motivation of characters is poorly developed, but the story is exciting and has enough insight to contribute to some interracial understanding.

AVERAGE—VERY GOOD

HILA COLMAN

In this reverse-integration story, *CLASSMATES BY REQUEST* (New York: William Morrow & Co., Inc., 1964), ten white students decided to enter a Negro school to support the demands of the Negro community for integration. The story alternates between Carla, the daughter of a white lawyer who was fighting for integration, and Ellen, a Negro girl whose mother cleaned house at Carla's home. Carla had to face the problems of being one of the few white students in a Negro school. Ellen was torn by the desire to work for integration, her personal desire to do well in school, and her distrust of white people. Finally the two girls became friends. Then Carla's father refused to appoint Ellen's father to a commission everyone had expected him to serve on, and trouble began again.

Classmates by Request alternates some very imaginative, skillful writing with some very trite scenes. The plot is unusual. In the juxtaposition of the white and Negro girls the author develops some good insights into race relations. The conflicts arising from community pressure, family loyalty and personal goals in both girls are well developed. However, much of the plot is contrived, and most of the minor characters are flat stereotypes.

In spite of these literary faults, *Classmates by Request* is interesting and enjoyable and should guide students to a greater understanding of each other.

AVERAGE—VERY GOOD

CATHERINE BLANTON

HOLD FAST TO YOUR DREAMS (New York: Julian Messner, 1955) is one of the more exciting but one of the less realistic of the junior novels for girls. In the story Emmy Lou left her small Southern town to live in Arizona with an aunt, where she could enroll in a ballet class with other girls. When she arrived, she found that segregation problems existed there too. Though Emmy easily formed friendships with most of the students, the counselor was reluctant to allow a Negro to participate in the advanced dance class. Gradually, however, her skill gained her acceptance by the top group. When a dancer was to be chosen for the city pageant, Emmy was selected. Though certain businessmen objected to the choice of a Negro, their objections were overruled, and Emmy gave an outstanding performance.

The plot is exciting, but contrived. Racial problems are presented effectively, but the solutions are improbable, depending on Emmy's exceptional talent. Emmy, herself, is so patient and forgiving that she doesn't elicit the sympathy that she might if her pain were more obvious. *Hold Fast to Your Dreams* is more likely to encourage dreams of glory than realistic facing of problems, but because of its rapid movement and readable style, this book should be popular with teenage girls.

AVERAGE—GOOD

HOPE NEWELL

Career stories are very popular with teenage girls, and Negro girls are beginning to appear in them. *A CAP FOR MARY ELLIS* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1952) is about a Negro girl who wanted to enroll in an all-Negro nursing school but was sent instead to an all-white school. She was pleased by the friendliness of most of the girls but was hurt deeply by the few who snubbed her. Mary Ellis decided to go home after having been punished for a mess her roommate had made, but her new big sister convinced her that she should stay.

The plot of *A Cap for Mary Ellis* is petty and unexciting. There is no romantic interest, and there are really no major obstacles to success. Mary Ellis is a little too sweet, a little too sensitive, and very bland. Though the book deals with the problems of integration and of growing up, it does not handle them well. However, it is one of the few career stories about Negroes in any field other than entertainment or sports. For slow readers this book is attractive because it is short and easy to read.

SLOW—FAIRLY GOOD

A sequel to the earlier book is *MARY ELLIS, STUDENT NURSE* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1958), likewise undistinguished. When Mary Ellis came back to nursing school for her second year, she and her friends found that one of the new girls was a thief. Mary Ellis began to have troubles in training after the thief was caught and expelled, but meeting a handsome young intern seemed to help.

The characters in this novel are interesting but still two-dimensional. The plot concerns problems that are more significant than in *A Cap for Mary Ellis* and includes an element of romance. The style is stilted, however.

Mary Ellis learned, as all teenagers must, to accept more and more responsibility and to take disappointments. She learned to deal maturely with problems and to get along with white girls.

SLOW—FAIRLY GOOD

ELIZABETH HAMILTON FRIERMOOD

A deep friendship between a white girl and a Negro girl is perfectly natural in *WHISPERING WILLOWS* (Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1964), a novel of a small town in the early 1900's. After her parents died, Tess lived with her Uncle Will, but she found motherly love in Stella, a warm Negro neighbor, and friendship in Irene, her daughter. Shortly after the story opens, Tess began to see that Irene was out-growing her and had now become a young woman ready to marry. Realizing that she was about to be left behind, Tess began to try to find other friends, especially a boyfriend.

The characters in *Whispering Willows* seem unaware that race might have been a barrier to their friendship. Irene's dark skin seemed less a handicap than Tess' excessive height. The Negroes did not have very good jobs, but neither did any one else in the community.

Whispering Willows treats a number of very significant problems for girls besides race relations solving them a little too easily, however. They are the struggles for social acceptance, to accept oneself, and to become an adult. Modern girls may have trouble identifying with the old-fashioned setting and characters.

AVERAGE—GOOD

FLORENCE CRANNELL MEANS

Florence Crannell Means is the most prolific writer of junior novels about Negroes and other minority groups. At her best she gives a sensitive picture of the strengths and the problems of a particular group of people. But in her poorer works the characters degenerate into caricatures and the plot becomes rambling and incoherent. Mrs. Means' use of local color and current events and her slightly patronizing attitude seem somewhat outdated.

SHUTTERED WINDOWS (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1938) is one of Mrs. Means' better books, but it is her oldest and now outdated. It is the story of a Negro girl from Minneapolis who went to live with her great-grandmother on an island off South Carolina. When she arrived, she was horrified by the poverty, superstition, and lack of education in the people she found there, but she was impressed with her great-grandmother and with handsome, lively Richard Corwin. She had trouble adjusting to the boarding school which she attended but gradually learned to understand the other girls and then decided to stay in the South.

One of the strong points of this book is the sympathetic portrayal of each character, the way the reader is shown the needs and desires behind apparently unfriendly people. However, some of the traits of the islanders are exaggerated almost to the point of caricature. The book emphasizes unselfishness, appreciation of the feelings of others, and a responsible attitude toward the community.

AVERAGE—FAIRLY GOOD

GREAT DAY IN THE MORNING (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1946) is the least successful of Florence Crannell Means' novels. Like *Shuttered Windows,* this book is set on St. Helena's Island, just off the South Carolina coast. But this book seems old fashioned and patronizing. St. Helena's Island and Mather School, as she writes of them, are out of date. Negroes are poor, ignorant, but rather exotic people who wait eagerly for missionary boxes from the North.

The main character, Lilybelle Lawrence, never quite warms up the reader's emotions. She was the "uppity" girl who, admirably, got an education but wanted to glorify herself instead of helping her people. Just why being a teacher—Lilybelle's goal—was so uppity and evil and why nursing was so obviously her true calling is never made clear. Nevertheless, Lily was punished whenever she tried a career other than nursing, and she finally surrendered and entered nursing school.

AVERAGE—POOR

REACH FOR A STAR (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1957) is likely to have more appeal for modern girls than Mrs. Means' two earlier books. The patronizing attitude and the stereotyped characters that marred her earlier books are less evident. The characters in *Reach for a Star* are modern college students who act like modern young people.

The story deals with a girl from Denver who went to Fisk University to try to forget her famous violinist exboyfriend. There she matured by helping her less fortunate roommates and by facing her own family's financial problems. Then she met Peter, a nice young man who was studying to be a minister. Finally she had to choose between her love for him and her love for Fred, the violinist.

The plot in *Reach for a Star,* though somewhat implausible, is coherent and well developed; the characters, though not outstanding, are easy to identify with. The race problem is almost completely absent in this novel, and it might be healthy for students to read of Negroes in ordinary situations rather than always facing racial problems.

AVERAGE—GOOD

TOLLIVER (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1963) is Mrs. Means' most recent and most exciting book about Negroes. Tolly was a girl preparing to graduate from Fisk University. Her boyfriend Sojer, however, had been suspended for cheating on his final exams. Tolly had unselfishly helped him through all his college years and was crushed to hear of his dishonesty and the end of their dreams. Tolly determined that she would never again become involved with anyone, and she returned home full of bitterness. However, through her understanding family, her experiences as a teacher, and a trip as a freedom rider, she regained her faith in mankind and decided to give Sojer another chance.

Literary techniques are not handled well. The plot is poorly developed with unbelievable coincidences and many irrelevant digressions. Moreover, although the central point of the story is Tolliver's acceptance of Sojer's failings, this change in attitude did not develop naturally. Part of this change was supposed to come from her experiences as a teacher, but her reactions to her students were so artificial that they were unbelievable. A slightly patronizing tone occurs in at least one section of this book.

However, interest in *Tolliver* should be high, for it has action and romance. The book also deals with a number of teenage problems such as race relations, teenage marriage, and accepting others as they are.

AVERAGE—FAIRLY GOOD

DOROTHY STERLING

MARY JANE (Garden City: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1959) is a story for junior high school students, but some ninth grade girls might still enjoy it. It is the story of a Negro girl who integrated a white school in a Southern town. At first Mary Jane was ignored or rejected by the other children, but gradually with her skill with animals she won acceptance.

The style is very simple and directed toward younger readers; however, the story is interesting enough that the reader may be able to forget that *Mary Jane* sounds like a child's book. The characters, especially Mary Jane, are developed well.

SLOW—VERY GOOD

JUNIOR NOVELS FOR BOYS

Books about Negroes for boys are very difficult to find. Of those listed on the following pages, *Jazz Country* and *All American* have white boys as the main characters, and *Freedom River, Call Me Charley,* and *Anchor Man* are primarily for younger boys. So there are only four appropriate books in this group about Negro teenage boys, *South Town, North Town, Durango Street,* and *Lions in the Way*. These four however, have been among the most popular in our library, enjoyed equally by both boys and girls. More books like *South Town* and *Durango Street* should be available, for teenage boys are more reluctant readers than teenage girls. Girls will read and enjoy stories about boys, but boys will not touch those about girls.

Jazz Country is an excellent book, but because of its subject matter, lack of excitement, and psychological depth, probably would not appeal to most boys. *All American* is a well-written sports story with a lot of action, but it is a little difficult for slow readers. *Durango Street, South Town,* and *North Town,* though they have some literary flaws, have almost universal appeal.

Books in this section are arranged so that those with similar topics follow each other.

FRANK BONHAM

DURANGO STREET (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1965), the story of a juvenile delinquent, very skillfully avoids the temptation either to preach against evil or to capitalize on the sensationalism and excitement of crime. Beginning when Rufus returned home from reform camp, the book pictures realistically the forces that tried to help Rufus overcome delinquency and those that led him into more trouble. In the dangerous neighborhood in which he lived, Rufus needed a gang for his own protection. On the other hand, an interested social worker provided a possibility for escape. The conflict between Rufus' desire for a respectable life and his fear of living without the gang was never resolved: the ending is realistic. Rufus indicated to the social worker that he would like to go back to school, but there was no guarantee that he would actually have the courage to do so.

Durango Street lacks the depth of an adult book like *Manchild in the Promised Land,* but it shows on a simpler level the psychological contradictions in the juvenile delinquent. Rufus' hunger for love and respect were so great that he believed his mother's absurd stories that his father was a famous football star. In contrast, he was thoroughly skilled in detecting the slightest insincerity in police and social workers. Although the style is not outstanding, it is fairly easy to follow. Boys should like this book. It is a realistic picture of gang life. And, when it tries to show the value of escaping the gang, it does not sound phony.

AVERAGE—VERY GOOD
(reading level) (literary quality)

LORENZ GRAHAM

SOUTH TOWN (Chicago: Follett Publishing Company, 1958) has enjoyed tremendous popularity at our school, probably because for a while it was the only book available about a Negro boy. David Williams had been raised under segregation but had a strong sense of self-worth derived from his mother. He resisted being ordered around by white people and by his father, who had gone off to the city where he could earn more money and be more respected. David and his friends first asserted themselves by painting their schoolhouse over the protests of the white school board. But later, when David and his father asserted their right to work and be paid like anyone else, his father was thrown into jail, and violence broke out ending with the murder of Travis, a white friend. The Williamses are victorious in the fight, but they decide to leave the city and move to the North.

South Town has literary flaws, but its good qualities are what impress the reader. The characters are either completely good or completely bad, but the plot is well developed. The action seems to be the result of the natures of characters, but it is believable action. The style is simple, almost childish, and the vocabulary is not advanced. Although *South Town* is a thorough explanation for the grievances of the Negro, it brings hope through the courage of the Williamses and the strength of Travis, the white exsoldier who died defending them. Students are almost unanimous in their praise of the book.

SLOW-AVERAGE—EXCELLENT

A sequel to the popular *South Town*, *NORTH TOWN* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Co., 1965) has some of the same weaknesses as its predecessor, but it too has qualities which make it popular. The book deals with a Negro attending an integrated school in the North, the only boys' story I have found that does so effectively.

On moving to the North, David Williams did not know what to expect, whether this was the promised land where all his problems would be over, or whether whites in the North were just as cruel as in the South. His first experiences were not promising. He was tricked into ringing the fire bell on his first day at school and then was dismissed from the football team when another Negro had a quarrel. He found that not only did most of the white students treat him as an "invisible man," but the successful Negro students wanted nothing to do with the country boy from the South. Falling in with the wrong crowd, he was arrested for riding in a stolen car. But Mike, a white football star, became his friend and David began to adjust. When his father was injured, David was forced to assume his father's responsibilities as head of the household—an experience which matured him enough to enable him to succeed in school and on the football team.

The characters in *North Town* are more realistic than those of *South Town.* The David who was apprehended by the police was not quite as simple a character as he was in the first book. The problems of integration are discussed at length, and the reader sees how the cruelty of white students causes the Negroes either to reject their own race or become belligerent toward everything not Negro.

North Town has nearly all the interest factors needed to make it popular with high school students.

SLOW-AVERAGE—EXCELLENT

BELLA RODMAN

The heat and anger of school desegregation gives *LIONS IN THE WAY* (Chicago: Follett Publishing Company, 1966) plenty of excitement. The town of Jameson had reluctantly decided to comply with the Supreme Court's decision on desegregation and Robert Jones and seven friends were to enter the white high school. Out-of-state white supremacists competed with local leaders who desired control of the town while militants and Uncle Toms battled for the minds of the Negro community.

Through a series of characters, the author explores various attitudes that emerge in such a situation. Steve Prouse feared and hated Negroes and wanted to keep them out at any cost. Mr. Cobb, the principal, disliked integration, but was willing to accept necessary changes. Rev. Logan knew that the Christian gospel calls for true equality, but he was afraid to speak. Among the Negroes, Howie had pride in his Negro heritage and courage to fight for his manhood. Mr. Baker had money and was willing to play Uncle Tom to keep it. *Lions in the Way* is an attempt to depict the complex interactions among people that create such tensions and disorder. The book is not completely successful. Because of the number of characters and their lack of development, it is difficult to keep them straight. The major characters, however, are quite realistic, and the plot is exciting and yet does not seem contrived. The writing style is generally satisfactory though a little stilted at points.

AVERAGE—VERY GOOD

JOHN TUNIS

In *ALL AMERICAN* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1942), a white football player tried to live by the American ideals of equality and fair play. After Ron and his teammates in a private school injured a player from the public league, Ron realized how conceited he and his friends were. After a struggle with himself and his family, he transferred to the city school where he found that he was treated as an enemy. And even there equality was not really practiced. When he finally was accepted by his new teammates, he led a fight to give Negro teammates full rights on the team.

All American is written rather well. The first chapter shows action in an almost experimental style with some use of symbols. The characters are developed to a fair depth, and their inner struggles are well presented. The book is also valuable for pointing out that many of the minor forms of discrimination that most people just accept should be opposed. Unfortunately, the problems are solved more by coincidence than by the characters themselves. The vocabulary and sentence structure are quite advanced and, unfortunately, too difficult for slow readers.

AVERAGE—EXCELLENT

NAT HENTOFF

JAZZ COUNTRY (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1965), like *The Catcher in the Rye* and *A Separate Peace,* discusses the problems of the adolescent in a mature, polished style. The problems of adolescence—identity and values—are compounded for Tom, who faced a color bar in reverse in his chosen field, jazz. "You're the wrong color," the wife of his hero told him, and Tom despairingly went over the list of greats in jazz to find that none of them was white. He was also told, "Your life has been too easy for you to be making it as a jazz musician." As he probed himself, he was not certain that he would be willing to take the risks and the suffering that were necessary to make him a great jazzman.

Negro and white students both should find it interesting to watch Tom as he tried to break through the prejudice and be accepted by the Negro musicians. He found that in order to be accepted by them, he had to understand and accept himself. *Jazz Country* contains the kind of depth and honesty that James Baldwin has, something that is rare in novels for juveniles. An excellent book, *Jazz Country* would probably have the most appeal to intellectual students who can appreciate Tom's struggle for genuine artistic self-expression.

ADVANCED—EXCELLENT

MARJORIE STONEMAN DOUGLAS

FREEDOM RIVER (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1953), though a good book, probably would not interest most high school boys. Set during Florida's struggle to become a state, the story has a certain amount of historical interest. It deals with the friendship of three boys, one white, one Negro, and one Indian. Their growth to maturity is symbolized by the Indian's initiation rites, the Negro's escape back to his home in the Bahamas, and the white boy's growth in courage that finally enabled him to reject slavery.

There is adventure and exploration in the story that would appeal to younger boys. Although the three main characters appear to be of high school age, their adventures in the everglades probably would not interest most high school boys. The style is simple but does not have a childish sound. This would be a very good book for junior high or elementary students.

SLOW—FAIR

JESSE JACKSON

CALL ME CHARLEY (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1945), while an exciting story, is definitely too immature for high school students. Dealing with the problems of the only Negro boy in an all-white town, it meets the problems of segregation well. However, the games the boys play are definitely grade school level.

CHILDREN ONLY—VERY GOOD

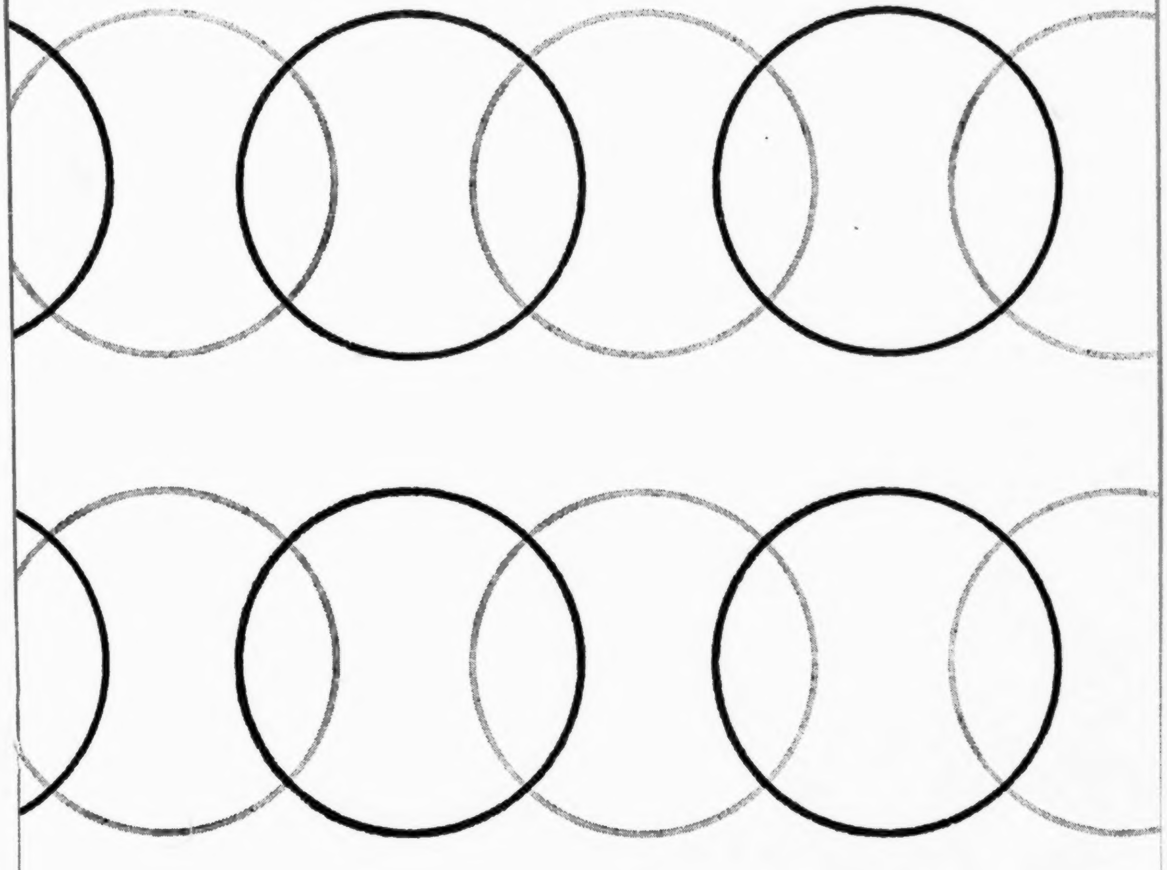
In *ANCHOR MAN* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1947), the sequel to *Call Me Charley,* Charley had won a place of honor at the Arlington High School with his high grades, a position on the student council, and his speed in track meets.

He had also become involved in the mischief-making stunts pulled by one of the most popular crowds in the school. However, when the school in an all-Negro town nearby burned down Charley found himself the center of a conflict between Duke, who hated all white people, and Mike, who was prejudiced against Negroes.

Anchor Man is a simple, short book with action. Neither the plot nor the characters are very well developed. Although the book is easy to read, many high school boys will probably enjoy it, especially those who are slow or reluctant readers.

SLOW—GOOD

BIOGRAPHY



BIOGRAPHIES OF HISTORICAL FIGURES, *87*

BIOGRAPHIES OF MODERNS, *98*
  - ENTERTAINERS, *106*
  - SPORTS HEROES, *109*

BIOGRAPHIES ABOUT NEGROES are not so scarce as other types of literature are. Biographies or autobiographies are available for a number of important historical figures, many current sports heroes, and show business personalities. For convenience, this section is classified under historical figures, contemporary people, entertainment leaders, and sports heroes. The reading level and literary quality evaluations are keyed in the same manner as in the section on junior novels.

BIOGRAPHIES OF HISTORICAL FIGURES

JUAN DE PAREJA

I, JUAN DE PAREJA, by Elizabeth Barton de Trevino (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, Inc., 1965), the Newbery Award winner, is the exciting story of the painter Velazquez's Negro slave. Juan's life was full of excitement. He fell in love with a slave of Rubens, but could not marry her because of his own slave status. Later Juan found that his own artistic talents were beginning to develop, but he was fearful because it was illegal for a slave to paint. After painting in secret for a long time, he finally confessed and threw himself on the mercy of the king and Velazquez. Velazquez granted him freedom, and Juan was at last able to marry and become a painter himself.

Though slavery in Spain differed from slavery in America, it still destroyed the slave's self-respect. The author shows how Juan gained dignity from the kindness of Brother Isidro, a priest who befriended him, and from the development of his own talent. As it narrates Juan's life with Velazquez, the book develops important ideas about art, especially a concept of artistic integrity.

AVERAGE—VERY GOOD
(reading level) (literary quality)

TITUBA

TITUBA OF SALEM VILLAGE, by Ann Petry (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Co., 1964), explores the Salem witch trials from the point of view of Tituba, Rev. Parris' Barbadian slave. Tituba, a simple folk character, contrasted with the social climbing Rev. Parris and his deceitful niece, Abigail. The story shows how Abigail and the other girls began to play with witchcraft and, when they got into trouble, used Tituba as a scapegoat.

The plot of *Tituba of Salem Village* is well constructed with many minor incidents that seem unimportant at first being used later in Tituba's trial. The characters, however, are shallow. Tituba lacks depth of feeling, and most of the other characters are either villains or too good to be real. The style is simple and at times talks down to the reader. Because the style sounds childish and there is not much action, this book is not likely to be very popular.

SLOW—FAIR

RICHARD ALLEN

RICHARD ALLEN, by Marcia M. Mathews (Baltimore: Helicon Press, Inc., 1963), tells the story of a slave who was freed in 1780 when his master was convinced of the evil of slavery by a Methodist minister. After working at various jobs for several years, Allen became an itinerate Methodist preacher and a leader among Negro Methodists. When the Methodist church in Philadelphia began placing too many restrictions on its Negro worshippers, Allen withdrew and eventually founded an African Methodist Church. Allen later became the first bishop of the African Methodist Episcopal Church. Always encouraging Negroes to organize themselves, he was instrumental in the formation of several other Negro societies.

The biography of Richard Allen is very valuable historically in showing early organizations of Negroes. The biography is quite acceptable in quality, but is not particularly exciting or outstanding. It is short and fairly easy to read.

AVERAGE—FAIRLY GOOD

BENJAMIN BANNEKER

YOUR MOST HUMBLE SERVANT: BENJAMIN BANNEKER, by Shirley Graham (New York: Julian Messner, 1949), describes one of those fascinating men of many talents of the Revolutionary era. A watch given him by a Jewish merchant first unlocked his inventive ability. From the watch, he built one of the first clocks made in America. After the Revolutionary War, he studied astronomy and made corrections in the calculations of some of the most noted astronomers of the day. When Major Ellicott, his neighbor, was asked to help plan the city of Washington, Banneker went with him. When Major L'Enfant deserted and took the plans for the city to France, Banneker reproduced them from memory. Banneker's fame also grew from a letter he sent to President Jefferson opposing slavery and from his popular almanac.

Your Most Humble Servant emphasizes creativity, determination, and men's interdependence on each other. The book includes elements of patriotism, success, romance, suspense, and adventure, so it should have fairly high interest value for adolescents. The style is reasonably good—easy to understand but not so simple as to be insulting. The story seems carefully researched, although it depends to a great extent on legend.

AVERAGE—VERY GOOD

PHILLIS WHEATLEY

THE STORY OF PHILLIS WHEATLEY: POETESS OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION, by Shirley Graham (New York: Julian Messner, 1949), the biography of America's first important Negro poetess, begins when a small slave girl was purchased by Mr. Wheatley of Boston. Amazed at the girl's intelligence, the family taught her reading, then literature, and finally Latin. Phillis gradually began writing poetry and soon became popular around Boston. Later she went to England where her poetry was again applauded. During the Revolution, she wrote a poem to Washington. After the death of Mr. Wheatley, Phillis married John Peters, but in the post war depression they were haunted by poverty, and she died young.

Phillis is portrayed as a very sweet-natured, thoughtful girl. The story seems to be fairly accurate, though it glosses over some of the characters' faults. Interest factors, at least for girls, include romance, family life, and the excitement of success. Students who are not advanced enough to read her poetry might enjoy reading about Phillis Wheatley's life.

AVERAGE—GOOD

CINQUE

SLAVE MUTINY: THE REVOLT ON THE SCHOONER AMISTAD, by William A. Owens (New York: John Day Co., 1953, o. p.), should be received enthusiastically by high school students. The story of Cinque, the African who was captured as a slave but in turn captured the slave ship, is unusually exciting and appeals strongly to racial pride. Cinque's case is also of historical value in showing how extremely difficult a slave rebellion was, for Cinque, even after capturing the ship, was unable to steer it back to Africa and was finally captured off the northern coast of the United States. At the trial many of the conflicts and errors in the white men's thoughts about slavery and Negroes were demonstrated.

The story, though historically accurate, is fictionalized so that it reads like a novel. Cinque is portrayed as a strong hero, sympathetic to children and friends; however, his occasional cruelty to his enemies and his desire for self-glory are not ignored. Perhaps the only drawback in its appeal to a high school audience would be its length and difficulty; the trial is described in more detail than most high school students would be interested in.

AVERAGE-ADVANCED—EXCELLENT

SOJOURNER TRUTH

HER NAME WAS SOJOURNER TRUTH, by Hertha Pauli (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1962, o. p.), tells the story of the first Negro woman orator to speak against slavery and for women's rights. Though unable to read or write, Sojourner was a very popular speaker in the North in spite of occasional trouble with pro slavery forces.

Unfortunately, the author does not capture the qualities that made her subject famous. One fourth of the book describes in fascinating detail Sojourner's being duped by an unscrupulous imposter who claimed he was God. With unnecessary detail it describes the wife-trading and unusual rites of the sect. All this is interesting, but it receives far too much space for an episode that lasted little over a year and had little relation to Sojourner's ultimate mission. In fact it casts doubt on her judgment or even her sanity and makes her later work sound fanatic.

Unfortunately, no other part of the book is as interesting or as real as this section. The abolitionists and women's rights fighters never become alive or exciting, and the reader never learns what Sojourner was really working for. One wonders if Sojourner herself knew. This is one of the most disappointing of the biographies.

AVERAGE—POOR

HARRIET TUBMAN

The heroic and exciting life of Harriet Tubman is interesting for young high school students. As a young slave girl, Harriet's skull was broken by her master and consequently she was considered half-witted. Hearing that she was to be sold down-river, she fled to the North. After her own escape, she began to arrange for the flight of her friends and relatives. Eventually she became the most important conductor on the Underground Railroad and led a great number of slaves to freedom. When the Civil War came, she served the Union as a spy, and in her old age she founded an orphanage.

HARRIET TUBMAN: CONDUCTOR ON THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD, by Ann Petry (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, Co., 1955), attempts to place the story in its historical context by discussing other events of the year at the end of each chapter. As a demonstration of the relationship of Harriet's life to our national history this would be very useful to history students. The style is fairly simple but shows a certain artistry.

SLOW-AVERAGE—VERY GOOD

FREEDOM TRAIN: THE STORY OF HARRIET TUBMAN, by Dorothy Sterling (Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1954), tells the same story. However, *Freedom Train* concentrates more on developing Harriet herself as an exciting personality and pays less attention to the historic significance of her life. As a result, *Freedom Train* is simpler, faster moving, and more exciting and, therefore, more appealing to slower students.

SLOW—VERY GOOD

FREDERICK DOUGLASS

Frederick Douglass was born a slave on a Maryland plantation but learned to read. Mistreated because he knew too much, Frederick finally escaped from slavery and gained fame as an orator. After the publication of his autobiography, he traveled to England and preached abolition there until friends could buy his freedom and he could return home safely. He became involved with John Brown's rebellion and became a major figure in the abolitionist cause. During the Civil War, Douglass recruited Negro soldiers for the army and sent his own two sons. Later he served in important government posts, such as ambassador to Haiti and marshal of the District of Columbia. Douglass is admirable in his courage in resisting oppression.

Frederick Douglass' autobiography, *THE LIFE AND TIMES OF FREDERICK DOUGLASS* (New York: Pathway Press, 1941, o. p.; reissued Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith), a lengthy 674 pages, is full of excitement, particularly in describing his attempts to escape from slavery. However, some of the later parts tend to ramble and include editorializing. The first section gives a picture of slavery with the brutal side shown by Mr. Covey, the slave breaker, and the gentle side shown by Miss Lucretia. The second section of the book shows the rise and development of the abolitionist cause and Douglass' experiences in England. The last section emphasizes politics and shows Douglass' relationship with and opinion of the presidents: Lincoln, Johnson, Hayes, Grant, Garfield, and Cleveland. He presents a different view of the Reconstruction period than is given in most history books.

Douglass' biography also includes a number of his speeches which could be studied by themselves if shorter selections are desired. Several can also be found in Brawley's *Early Negro American Writers.*

ADVANCED—VERY GOOD

THE NARRATIVE OF THE LIFE OF FREDERICK DOUGLASS, AN AMERICAN SLAVE (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960), Benjamin Quarles, editor, first published only seven years after Douglass escaped from slavery, lacks the literary polish of his later autobiography. It is a very short book and uses much simpler sentences and vocabulary than the later work. Of course, it only includes the earlier part of Douglass' life until shortly after his escape from slavery. Even this part of his life is less complete than in the later work, partly because Douglass had to leave out some things to protect those who had helped him. More advanced students should be encouraged to read *The Life and Times of Frederick Douglass*, but younger and slower students would probably prefer the *Narrative of a Slave* for its short, vivid descriptions.

AVERAGE—VERY GOOD

THERE WAS ONCE A SLAVE: THE HEROIC STORY OF FREDERICK DOUGLASS, by Shirley Graham (New York: Julian Messner, 1957), is more interesting for the modern reader than either of the autobiographies. This biography shows a certain amount of literary craftsmanship, with a clear and imaginative style, a skillful switch in point of view, and a clever use of symbols. However, there is a slight tendency to stereotype the characters, and Douglass is portrayed as an almost superhuman hero. Although it emphasizes his positive qualities too much, the book makes him appear an exciting and interesting person.

AVERAGE—VERY GOOD

A STAR POINTED NORTH, by Edmund Fuller (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1946, o. p.), gives a stark picture of slavery. The style, especially the conversation, is vivid. This book is the easiest of the four books about Douglass. *A Star Pointed North* is more exciting than *There Was Once a Slave*, but it is not as well developed or as well written.

SLOW-AVERAGE—VERY GOOD

ROBERT SMALLS

Dorothy Sterling's biography of Robert Smalls is *CAPTAIN OF*

THE PLANTER: THE STORY OF ROBERT SMALLS (Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1958). In most history books, the contributions of Negroes during the Civil War and Reconstruction are ignored. Robert Smalls was one of the heroes who is rarely mentioned. He was a Negro slave who stole a ship from the Confederates, served on it with the Union Army with distinction, and finally served several terms in Congress. All this was accomplished against the handicaps first of slavery, then of the prejudice of the Union Army, and finally of the Jim Crow laws, which eventually conquered him.

Besides its value in contradicting the history book insinuation that the Negro was incapable of political enterprise and that the South was right in imposing Jim Crow laws, *Captain of the Planter* is an exciting adventure story. Captain Smalls' escape from slavery and his battle exploits make interesting reading, and the style is fast moving.

AVERAGE—EXCELLENT

AMOS FORTUNE

Amos Fortune was an African slave who was purchased by a kindly Quaker who taught him English, reading, and weaving. He was later sold to a tanner who taught him tanning and allowed him to buy his freedom. He set up his trade and bought a wife. When she died, he acquired another wife and her daughter, freed them, and took them west with him. There he lived the rest of his life, a very useful and respected man. At his death he left a memorial to the church and school.

AMOS FORTUNE, FREE MAN, by Elizabeth Yates (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1950), emphasizes the Quaker virtues of patience and forgiveness. Amos, by submission and acceptance of his fate, overcame slavery and became a man, Amos' life is an illustration of nonviolence at work. However, some students might consider Amos Fortune an Uncle Tom and feel that he is too forgiving. The reading level and style are simple enough for elementary school children, but most of the material is mature enough for high school students.

SLOW—GOOD

AMOS FORTUNE'S CHOICE, by F. Alexander Magoun (Freeport, Maine: Bond Wheelwright Co., 1964), is a much longer, more difficult, very carefully researched book about Amos Fortune. The crisis in this book is Amos' choice of how he will react to slavery: whether he would spend his life hating white men, or whether he would accept his lot and try to be a man under any circumstances. Although Amos is still portrayed as a tender, kind person, this book shows him with more spirit and a more violent reaction against slavery. At times the author intrudes into the plot by describing the research methods and locations where certain information was found. The author also tends to philosophize, slowing the action somewhat.

ADVANCED—GOOD

GEORGE WASHINGTON CARVER

George Washington Carver was a skillful scientist who devoted his life to research into the agricultural problems of his people during Reconstruction. He did remarkable work in finding uses for peanuts and sweet potatoes and in improving farming practices among the poor farmers of the South. His drive to obtain an education and his sacrificing of fame and wealth to help his people make him an inspirational figure.

For many years George Washington Carver's story has been one of the few about a Negro accepted and told in school books. While Carver was undoubtedly a great man, one wonders if his popularity is not as much the result of his quiet personality and refusal to fight segregation as it is of his achievements as a scientist. In contrast to many biographies that oversimplify Carver's character, Rackham Holt's biography, *GEORGE WASHINGTON CARVER* (Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1942), presents Carver as a rounded human being. In Holt's writing, Carver is still a gentle, kind scientist, but he is not perfect. The biography is quite detailed and shows careful research.

AVERAGE—GOOD

BOOKER T. WASHINGTON

Booker T. Washington for many years was considered the major spokesman for his race and, with George Washington Carver, was one of the two Negroes occasionally mentioned in textbooks. His story is quite fascinating, showing how after emancipation he struggled to obtain an education and eventually founded Tuskegee Institute. He is now quite out of favor with many Negroes, for he did not fight segregation and encouraged Negroes to accept menial jobs.

UP FROM SLAVERY, by Booker T. Washington (New York: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1933), was written in the stilted, genteel style of the late nineteenth century. The earlier part of the book which tells of his struggles to obtain an education is fascinating. However, some students may lose interest in the detailed accounts of some of his money-making and school administration problems.

AVERAGE—GOOD

DANIEL HALE WILLIAMS

Dr. Daniel Hale Williams was the first surgeon to operate on the human heart. He was also one of the founders of Chicago's Providence Hospital and leader in the improvement of medical training and facilities for Negroes. Attending medical school in the 1880's he received the best training available at that time and soon became a leading surgeon. A skillful and conscientious doctor, he was unfortunately hindered in his work by racial and political quarrels.

This story of Dr. Daniel Hale Williams, *DOCTOR DAN: PIONEER IN AMERICAN SURGERY* by Helen Buckler (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1954, o. p.), is a very inspirational and valuable one. Also it shows the workings of Negro politics under Booker T. Washington when one had to apply to Tuskegee for a position in Washington. The book, however, becomes too much an apology for Dr. Williams. The biographer never admits that the doctor could have been wrong, making him instead unbelievably good. Some of the quarrels about hospitals and personalities are told in too much detail. Most of the book is an interesting and effective story of a very admirable person.

MARY MC LEOD BETHUNE

Education was the goal of all of Mary McLeod Bethune's life. First there was the struggle to obtain her own education during the hard times of the late nineteenth century. Then for many years she strove to build a school of her own, finally succeeding with Daytona Educational and Industrial Training School, later a part of Bethune-Cookman College. She was nationally known for her educational work and for her work to improve conditions of women.

Rackham Holt's biography, *MARY MC LEOD BETHUNE* (Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1964), is interesting and factual, but Mrs. Bethune never appears as a rounded character. She is always too good, and the style seems somehow more appropriate for a sermon or a Sunday School magazine than for an objective biography. Although there is little romance or excitement to create interest, the book is easy to read and quite short. It is a fairly good study of an outstanding person for younger high school students to read.

SLOW—GOOD

PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

THAT DUNBAR BOY, by Jean Gould (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1964), is obviously written for young readers. The book emphasizes Dunbar's childhood and school life and tends to gloss over unhappier periods in his life.

The style is simple but not outstanding. The plot development is good, but the characters are all too nice for real life. Romance and overcoming prejudice are not handled effectively. The book describes Dunbar's problems in finding a job and publishing his poetry and his early death, but it ignores his marital difficulties and minimizes his problems with discrimination. Younger children and slow readers would probably enjoy this biography more than mature readers.

MATTHEW HENSON

AHDOOLO!, by Floyd Miller (New York: E. P. Dutton &

Co., Inc., 1963), is the story of Matthew Henson, the Negro explorer who accompanied Admiral Robert E. Peary on his expeditions to the North and his final discovery of the North Pole in 1909. It is a story full of the excitement of men facing the dangers of nature. Henson is an excellent hero: his ability to make friends with the Eskimos shows his warm heart, and a number of incidents reveal his courage and endurance.

While the story itself is very exciting, the author does not develop as much suspense as he could have. The problems of exploration are explained in some detail, and sometimes minor and uninteresting incidents are given exaggerated importance. Although there are some problems of segregation discussed—and there were many times when Henson was not given full credit for his achievements because he was a Negro—the author treats Henson as an explorer among explorers. Like the word *Ahdoolo!*, which Henson coined, the book expresses hope and courage.

AVERAGE—GOOD

BIOGRAPHIES OF MODERNS

E. R. BRAITHWAITE

TO SIR, WITH LOVE, an autobiographical account by E. R. Braithwaite (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1960), is a beautiful book dealing with the same problems and joys as *Up the Down Staircase,* but written in narrative style. Here, the teacher is a Negro man in a white slum in England. Parts of the book deal with the race problem, such as Braithwaite's failure to secure employment in the fields for which he was trained and the problems he encountered when he decided to marry a white teacher. However, the main impact of the book deals with his attempts to win the respect of his students and to develop self-respect within them.

Braithwaite's understanding and care for his students make him a person that young people and adults can admire and like. Characters are portrayed with depth and feeling, and the plot is well developed. The style is good, and the story moves well.

This book should be especially popular since it has been released as a movie starring Sidney Poitier.

AVERAGE—EXCELLENT

CLAUDE BROWN

The most obvious comment about Claude Brown's *MANCHILD IN THE PROMISED LAND* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1965), another autobiographical account, is that it is controversial. My students had mixed feelings that varied from, "It was one of the best books I have ever read," to, "Books like that shouldn't be written."

Like the *Autobiography of Malcolm X, Manchild in the Promised Land* pictures the squalor, crime, and terror of life in the ghetto. The descriptions of the delinquent acts performed by three-to-six-year-old boys are shocking. Although at times this book seems to glory in the excitement of crime and delinquency, the primary attitude is relief and thankfulness for having escaped the horrors of the ghetto. What the author tells of his friends who were trapped by dope or organized crime should be sufficient warning for a prospective delinquent.

Manchild in the Promised Land provides a deep psychological and sociological study of the ghetto that would be profitable study for mature students. The conditions described in this book help explain the explosiveness of the ghetto today. The literary technique of the book is acceptable but not outstanding. The plot jumps around, and a little too much of it seems to be spent in reminiscence. But the overall impact is so powerful that weaknesses in style such as those above are scarcely noticed.

ADVANCED—EXCELLENT

RALPH J. BUNCHE

This biography of Ralph J. Bunche tells of his difficult childhood in the Detroit slums, the death of his parents, his education, and his work as a diplomat, especially with the United Nations in the Middle East.

Quite sentimentalized, *RALPH J. BUNCHE: FIGHTER FOR PEACE,* by J. Alvin Kugelmass (New York: Julian Messner, 1962), presents Bunche as a person who could do no wrong. Apparently attempting to compromise between a fictionalized biography and a factual one, the book speculates on the incidents of his early life. Instead of presenting fictionalized conversations with his friends, it says he "might have had" a conversation like this. The result is not satisfactory; the action is slower than it could be, and the author seems to intrude too much.

The primary value of *Ralph J. Bunche: Fighter for Peace* is inspirational. It makes a beautiful "log cabin almost to white house story" and provides an excellent model for young hero worshippers. Bunche's ability to laugh at insults and to gain his rights by friendly actions were a good foundation for his efforts to gain international peace through understanding and hard work.

SLOW—GOOD

SEPTIMA POINSETTE CLARK

ECHO IN MY SOUL, by Mrs. Clark and LeGette Blythe (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1962), is the story of a courageous Negro teacher's fight to bring education and civil rights to her people. Her career was full of challenges in a primitive school on St. John's Island, in civil rights work in Charleston, and with the experimental Highlander Folk School. She had the courage to stand up against intimidation, social pressure, and the loss of her job.

Highly inspirational, *Echo in My Soul* shows a woman who met and overcame all the forces that can conspire against a young Negro. Few books present a more realistic challenge to Negro youth. Unfortunately, however, the style is dull. Instead of choosing the most interesting incidents of her life and retelling them vividly, Mrs. Clark tries to tell everything without developing any one thing adequately. The book is filled with names, but few of them ever become people. Good readers might enjoy *Echo in My Soul,* but the reluctant reader certainly will not be motivated by it.

AVERAGE—POOR

JOHN HOWARD GRIFFIN

John Howard Griffin, in *BLACK LIKE ME* (Boston: Houghton

Mifflin Company, 1961), experienced what the segregated South was like to a Negro by using treatments to turn his skin dark. Not only did other people treat him differently, but he began to feel differently about himself. At first, he was impressed by the courtesy of the whites he met in New Orleans, but he soon learned that being turned down from a job courteously still meant no job. He recounts skillfully the subtle change in people's attitudes as he rode the bus into Mississippi and the depth of hatred and fear which developed between the races. He shows sensitively the reaction to the "hate stare" and other actions of the whites that deeply injured him. Insights into the Negro also came as he spent the night with a poor but strong sharecropper's family.

Black Like Me is well written and gives a thorough, frightening picture of segregation in the South. It is justifiably popular among both Negro and white students.

AVERAGE—EXCELLENT

MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.

Martin Luther King was the leader of the nonviolent civil rights movement. *WHAT MANNER OF MAN: A BIOGRAPHY OF MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.*, by Lerone Bennett, Jr. (Chicago: Johnson Publishing Co., Inc., 1964), is a thorough, adult biography of him. Written with depth and insight, it traces the influences on King that helped him develop his commitment to passive resistance. It traces his family background, his education, and the social events that led to his passive resistance movement.

The book has an unusual format, resembling a text. However, it has a liberal number of photographs and is quite attractive. It is excellent for advanced students who would like to investigate the philosophical background of King's movement.

ADVANCED—EXCELLENT

PAULI MURRAY

PROUD SHOES, by Pauli Murray (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1956, o.p.), is a spirited book affirming the right of the Negro to be proud of himself, his race, and his ancestors. The author tells with pride of four generations of her family tree. In her carefully researched story there is a lot of information not generally known about Negroes before and during the Civil War. Her grandmother was the Negro concubine of a white slaveowner. Her great-grandfather, a freedman, had married a white woman and had been a prosperous farmer, but they struggled to be successful in a world that did not accept them. It was her grandfather of whom she was the most proud, for despite ill health and bad eyesight, he had served with the Union Army during the Civil War and had taught in freedmen's schools after the War. Every aspect of these stories is portrayed with great sympathy and understanding.

Proud Shoes is well written; the characters, even the minor ones, are as alive as they were in the child's imagination. The circumstances surrounding these events lend interest, including both war and romance. The book should be very valuable to both white and Negro students, who have too few opportunities to read about the accomplishments of ordinary Negroes in Civil War times.

JAMES H. ROBINSON

From *ROAD WITHOUT TURNING* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Co., 1950, o.p.):

> When I revisit the Knoxville Bottoms, as I did not long ago, and see the ragged, dirty and underfed children, the putrid creek which still inundates the area after all these years (when less than fifty miles away the Tennessee Valley Authority has harnessed the great Tennessee River), and the rickety, unpainted shacks and the unpaved streets, I marvel that I could have survived it, much less surmounted its great barriers. I can see what one life, even though it may issue from that dark abyss, can accomplish when it is encouraged by anything approaching an equal chance. In each man there is a spark capable of kindling new fires of imagination and progress if he can only find the means to fan it into flame. (p. 300)

The quote above sums up the reasons for reading Robinson's autobiography, for this life story, if any, is capable of kindling new fires of imagination and progress. Overcoming terrible obstacles as a child when he was forced to lie to his parents and sometimes to starve in order to attend school, Robinson found that the hardest obstacles were mental and spiritual ones. Robinson's sensitive heart had a long road to go before he could overcome the hatred for whites that he had learned from many years of discrimination. Finally Robinson graduated from Union Seminary and started a church in Harlem where he tried to help the neighborhood.

A valuable book for white and Negro students both, Robinson's autobiography is a great inspiration and an excellent portrait of the evils of racial prejudice. AVERAGE—EXCELLENT

JESSIE BENNETT SAMS

Veanie and Mingie, poverty-stricken Negro twins, lived with their paralyzed father but were aided and cared for by a kind white woman. Veanie and Mingie faced the problems of growing up and getting an education with the aid of their white benefactor. Veanie, always the shyer of the two, was upset when her sister left to get married, but she stayed to finish high school and later went to college.

WHITE MOTHER, by Jessie Bennett Sams (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., Inc., 1957), is a tender, beautiful book about a woman who was brave and kind enough to overcome the barriers of race. The conversation is vivid and the characterization good.

WILL THOMAS

THE SEEKING, by Will Thomas (New York: A. A. Wyn, Inc., 1953), is the autobiography of a Negro man and his family and their search for acceptance in America. The story starts as Will Thomas and his family are moving to Vermont, hoping to escape prejudice. Through a series of flashbacks, Thomas tells how prejudice had affected him. He tells of his first twelve years in a prejudice-free section of Chicago and of his gradually learning the meaning of race-hate in Kansas. Later on, as an adult, he traveled from place to place finding more and more segregation and discrimination and becoming more and more bitter. Finally, by the time he moved to Vermont, he had become so disillusioned by the deceptions of white people that he could not believe the friendly acceptance of his Vermont neighbors. The final sections show the gradual return of his faith in humanity and his realization that some white people can be honest.

The literary quality of *The Seeking* is fairly high. Mr. Thomas' spiritual development is told in a believable, objective way. There is enough action to keep the story interesting, and his fears keep suspense developing.

The Seeking shows white students the sensitivity and fears that prejudice causes in the Negro. For Negro students it shows that it is possible for whites and Negroes to live in harmony and offers a message of hope.

AVERAGE—EXCELLENT

HOWARD THURMAN

This biography by Elizabeth Yates, *HOWARD THURMAN: PRACTICAL DREAMER* (New York: The John Day Co., Inc., 1964), would be of interest to only a rather limited number of students with a strong interest in religion, but for these it would be very rewarding. The plot is concerned with the development of the man's soul, not with his physical actions. Long sections show Thurman dealing with the mystic ideas of Rufus Jones and the nonviolence of Gandhi and incorporating them into his own philosophy. Although Thurman could not ignore discrimination, a man's spiritual awareness is more important to him than his economic privileges. Discrimination's effect on man's spirit supersedes the effect on his residence.

Students mature enough to deal with philosophical problems could gain by a comparison of Howard Thurman with Martin Luther King, who had similar philosophical ideas but used them a different way.

ADVANCED—GOOD

WILLIE MAE WORKMAN

Willie Mae Workman's life is worthy of a biography not because of anything unusual she has accomplished but as a symbol of the thousands of poor but incredibly strong Negro women who have struggled for a living. Growing up with almost no home, shuttled from one relative to another, Willie Mae was forced to work to survive when very young. Although she had to work as a maid or cook, she never lost her pride and eventually, when she was growing old, left for the North where she hoped to find more freedom and dignity.

WILLIE MAE, by Elizabeth Larisey Kytle (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1958), should be very enlightening for young people who have never had to work for their food. She shows how the human spirit can survive and grow in even the most desperate circumstances. The book is exciting and well written.

AVERAGE—VERY GOOD

MALCOLM X

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF MALCOLM X, written with Alex Haley (New York: Grove Press, 1964), is a disturbing book about the spiritual growth of a great man. His ideas are so different from the teaching of our culture that they at first seem bizarre, but after one reflects on them, they appear uncomfortably close to the truth. Someone who can read critically, yet with an open mind, will finish the book with more insight into history and world problems as well as America's race problem. Now that many of Malcolm X's ideas are gaining widespread influence through the Negro revolution, this book is particularly significant.

Malcolm X grew up intimately acquainted with the problems of ghetto living and, like many boys, found that there was almost no legal way for a Negro man to make a good living. The description of his life of crime is so vivid that the first 150 pages of the book are almost a series of how-to-do-it lessons on burglary, gambling, pimping, and assorted other "hustles." While in prison, Malcolm X joined the Black Muslims and soon he became one of their leaders. Finally, on a pilgrimage to Mecca he accepted the teachings of the orthodox Islamic faith.

The Autobiography of Malcolm X is an important book that Americans need to read, but the reading should be guided by a mature teacher who can keep his students from being sidetracked by the descriptions of crime or the internal problems of the Black Muslims.

ENTERTAINERS

MARIAN ANDERSON

MY LORD, WHAT A MORNING, an autobiography (New York: The Viking Press, Inc., 1956), tells of Marian Anderson's career from her childhood singing in churches through her successful tours abroad and finally her debut with the Metropolitan Opera. Among the incidents that might be particularly interesting to teenagers were her unsuccessful attempts to enter an all-white school and her first failure in her town hall concert. Most of the incidents are interesting and sometimes humorous, but there are no great climaxes and there is not much suspense.

The style is simple and direct but not outstanding. The first part of the book, about a teenager finding herself and her career, is of particular value to high school students, but the rest of the book about her concert tours tends to become dull. The story does not have enough excitement, romance, or other interest factors to make it popular.

AVERAGE—FAIR

SAMMY DAVIS, JR.

The main drawback for high school students to this highly interesting autobiography is its length—630 pages. However, there are many stirring episodes and such a lively, humorous style that students read it despite its length. Sammy Davis, Jr., wrote this book, *YES, I CAN* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1965), with Jane and Burt Boyar. The story, of course, revolves around show business beginning with three-year-old Sammy's first performances on the stage with his father and ending with his celebrated performances on Broadway. A major theme portrays the constant struggle of a Negro entertainer against white prejudice on as well as off the stage. One student reacted negatively to the book because she felt Sammy implied that he had been accepted only because he had talent and that untalented Negroes did not have a chance. And it is true that parts of his story will offer little hope or inspiration for the not very talented students or those who do not have the right friends. It was commendable of Frank Sinatra to fight the management so that Sammy could enter a nightclub, but, unfortunately, not every Negro is a friend of Frank Sinatra.

Nevertheless, the book is exciting, and with Sammy Davis, Jr., now at the acme of his career it should be quite popular.

AVERAGE—VERY GOOD

KATHERINE DUNHAM

Although *A TOUCH OF INNOCENCE* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1959, o.p.) is an autobiography of Katherine Dunham, a dancer whose troupe introduced Negro folk dances to Americans, it is not a career book. Instead it is a sensitive study of a girl growing up. The problems of attaining adulthood are compounded for Katherine by the death of her mother and later the estrangement of her father from the rest of the family. The quarrels among various branches of her family which ranged from almost white to almost black created another special problem. The story follows her life from birth, through the various interesting places she lived, to adulthood when she moved away from home and got her first job.

A Touch of Innocence is a beautifully written book with poetic descriptions that only occasionally appear a bit overdone. The struggles of a girl to find values show a deep exploration of the child's or adolescent's soul. Sometimes, however, the revelations become almost too intimate, and then the author has a little difficulty in referring to herself. While this book might not have wide appeal, for introspective teenage girls it might be regarded as a treasure. It is valuable for helping shy teenagers see that other people share the kinds of thoughts that they have.

DICK GREGORY

Dick Gregory's autobiography shows the effects of poverty on a boy's life and the hunger for both food and respect that accompany poverty. The starkness of his life is emphasized by his daydreams and his excessive pride in such a little thing as a clean bandaid. In this world of poverty, Dick learned to bluff, to pretend, and to laugh—the skills that he would later use as an entertainer.

NIGGER (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1964), written with R. Lipsyte, is outstanding among the autobiographies available. The writing shows considerable skill—at times using a modified stream-of-consciousness technique—and is always vivid and supported by details. The ravaging effects of poverty certainly are not minimized, but they are not exaggerated beyond belief. The last section deals with the civil rights movement and Dick Gregory's part in it.

This is an outstanding autobiography that almost all high school students will enjoy.

AVERAGE—EXCELLENT

LENA HORNE

"They've never been given a chance to see a Negro woman as a woman. You've got to give them that chance," Count Basie once said to Lena Horne. Lena Horne was one of the first Negro performers to refuse to be stereotyped. A childhood that alternated between high society and lower class life gave her an independence of public opinion. Yet in escaping the stereotype, she was forced to look within herself for her identity as a woman, a performer, and a Negro.

LENA, by Lena Horne with Richard Schickel (New York: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1965), is an interesting autobiography with information about the person as well as the performer. Lena's unusual background and childhood as well as her interracial marriage add interest. The style, though not unusual, is competent.

AVERAGE—VERY GOOD

ETHEL WATERS

This famous blues singer climbed from a redlight district of Philadelphia to stardom on Broadway. Ethel Waters in her autobiography, *HIS EYE IS ON THE SPARROW* (Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1951, o.p.), describes that climb. Her early life as a fatherless child, passed from relative to relative, is full of excitement and shows the almost insurmountable problems a person can overcome. Living with prostitutes and drunks, Ethel became very tough but never lost her hope and faith. As she started into show business she found more excitement. Life on the Negro theater circuit was a series of harrowing experiences.

The style of writing is frequently amusing, and the events are certainly interesting. Although the book deals frankly with problems of sex, language, and crime, it never appears crude. Ethel Waters' spirit and faith overcame great obstacles.

AVERAGE—VERY GOOD

SPORTS HEROES

ROY CAMPANELLA

The Roy Campanella story has lost a little in age; it is more interesting to read about a current player than one who has not played for almost ten years. However, Campanella's autobiography has much to recommend itself to high school students. It concerns one of the first Negroes in the major leagues, a man who overcame many handicaps even before the auto accident that put him in a wheelchair. Campanella faced prejudice as a boy and then faced the opposition of his parents when he tried to enter baseball. For nine years he had to be content with the Negro and South American leagues before receiving a chance to play in the major leagues. A high degree of faith and courage are the primary qualities that make *IT'S GOOD TO BE ALIVE,* by Roy Campanella (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1959), a valuable and inspirational book. A good style makes it fairly interesting.

Jackie Robinson in his autobiography discusses Campanella's refusal to become involved in civil rights. A good assignment might be to compare the two ballplayers.

AVERAGE—GOOD

CASSIUS CLAY

Cassius Clay is a colorful, controversial character who has attracted the interest of teenagers, and for this reason, his biographies should also attract them. Clay grew up in Louisville, Kentucky, where he became interested in boxing. After winning the Golden Gloves Championship and the Olympic Championship, he finally became heavyweight champion of the world. Then Clay became immersed in the Black Muslim religion and his activities in this group have made him very unpopular. Perhaps Clay is too strange and complex a character for any biographer to deal with effectively, particularly a white man, but neither biography is very satisfactory.

THE CASSIUS CLAY STORY, by George Sullivan (New York: Fleet Publishing Co., 1964), contains the basic elements of Clay's story, but unfortunately, Clay's bombastic personality is strangely absent. The biographer attempts to be fair but inevitably reveals a confused understanding of Clay. He admires Clay as a model child; in fact, he makes it difficult to see how the well-mannered boy could turn into the controversial boxer. He reports with a straight face and a censure note of Clay's poetry and antics with the press, but he misses his chance to enliven the book with these humorous sidelights. He is very unsympathetic to Clay's activities with the Black Muslims, saying that they have ruined his career and indoctrinated him with the wrong ideas.

AVERAGE—FAIR

BLACK IS BEST, by Jack Olsen (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1967), probes much deeper into Clay's personality than *The Cassius Clay Story* does. The biographer appears to be seriously trying to understand Clay's ideas and actions. However, the author apparently has not seriously investigated the Black Muslim faith, and he presents only the fanatical elements and does not come to terms with those elements that are genuinely attractive. The author traces Clay's interest in the Black Muslims to his father's instability and hatred of the white man and to Clay's own low intelligence which allows him to be led astray. The biography is well written and intelligently researched, but it is thoroughly the white man's version of Cassius Clay.

ALTHEA GIBSON

Althea Gibson is a well-known tennis star. Her autobiography, *I ALWAYS WANTED TO BE SOMEBODY* (New York:

Harper & Row, Publishers, 1958), though not as deeply developed as many others, provides very interesting reading. The story of her childhood as a Harlem tomboy and later her life in a small town in the South and her fights against the prejudice that tried to keep her from playing in national matches are all of wide interest. The rest of the story, her wins and losses and her various tours, becomes somewhat routine, though it is perked up by accounts of her international tours.

Althea Gibson is an exciting personality that teenage girls can identify with. This is a good but not outstanding book.

WILLIE MAYS

Willie Mays, the home-run hitting Giants outfielder, has been a favorite of sports fans for several years.

The conversational, reminiscent style of *WILLIE MAYS: MY LIFE IN AND OUT OF BASEBALL,* as told to Charles Einstein (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1966), often captures the humor, innocence, and high spirits which created the Willie Mays legend. At times the book rambles through seemingly unconnected events that never establish any point. Mays seems unconcerned about his image and relates in detail many of his problems and quarrels.

AVERAGE—GOOD

Emphasizing the innocence and good humor of the "Say Hey Kid," *THE WILLIE MAYS STORY,* by Milton J. Shapiro (New York: Julian Messner, 1960, o.p.), is more concerned with the Willie Mays legend than the man himself. Although it concerns primarily Mays' baseball career, it is more interesting than the ball game replays that fill many sports biographies, for it emphasizes the feelings and personalities of Willie Mays and his friends. Shorter, less serious, and easier to read than his autobiography, *The Willie Mays Story* is a good book for the slower reader.

SLOW—GOOD

LE ROY (SATCHEL) PAIGE

Almost a pure sports story, *MAYBE I'LL PITCH FOREVER*

(Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1962) has much less of its subject's life outside baseball than many other sports biographies. Although Paige probably suffered more from discrimination than most of the other Negro players whose biographies are popular, there is comparatively little about segregation. Except for the two first chapters, which are about his childhood, and the short sections about his wives, there is very little about the rest of his life. The story of his career as a pitcher becomes a little monotonous because it seems to be one long success story. One time his arm was hurt; otherwise he seemed to have no major slumps or obstacles.

Although the events are somewhat repetitious—one shutout after another—*Maybe I'll Pitch Forever* is a very readable autobiography. Although not exactly humorous, it is filled with a kind of carefree charm and good-natured boastfulness. The book is an autobiography as told to David Lipman.

Though not as valuable a character story as the autobiographies of Jackie Robinson or Roy Campanella, *Maybe I'll Pitch Forever* is a book that should excite sports fans.

FLOYD PATTERSON

Floyd Patterson's problems of identity and self-esteem are problems many adolescents must face. The young boy who had such a poor self-image that he marked out his face on a picture and refused to speak in school had much to learn before he was ready to fight for the heavyweight championship. Although in many ways *VICTORY OVER MYSELF*, by Floyd Patterson with Milton Gross (New York: Bernard Geis Associates, 1962), is a typical sports story cataloguing Patterson's various fights and his development as a boxer, the book strives toward something deeper, a real understanding of his character. In the sections about his youth and the fight with Johanssen, *Victory over Myself* reveals more of the author's inner tensions than most sports autobiographies.

Victory over Myself is by no means a great book, but it is better than the average sports story. However, it is probably less popular now since the defeat of Patterson by two heavyweight contenders.

AVERAGE—GOOD

JACKIE ROBINSON

Jackie Robinson, the first Negro to play in the major leagues, had enough experiences to enable him to suffer silently the many insults he received in the first year in the major leagues. There are three biographies that describe Robinson's life: *WAIT TILL NEXT YEAR,* by Carl T. Rowan with Jackie Robinson (New York: Random House, Inc., 1960, o.p.); *JACKIE ROBINSON OF THE BROOKLYN DODGERS,* by Milton J. Shapiro (New York: Julian Messner, 1957); and *JACKIE ROBINSON,* by Gene Schoor (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1958, o.p.). Born in a poverty-stricken home in the South and having lived in a predominantly white neighborhood in Pasadena, Jackie learned to live with the cruelty of others. In his first two years with the Dodgers, he followed Branch Rickey's advice to absorb the insults without retaliating. But at the same time he developed a strong sense of pride and self-respect, and soon began to demand recognition of his rights. His eagerness to do everything possible to win rights for his people and his refusal to compromise with prejudice made him unpopular with many but a hero among others.

Wait Till Next Year is of somewhat wider interest than most sports stories because it deals quite extensively with Robinson's life outside of baseball, especially with his romance and family life and his civil rights activities. Also, Robinson is pictured all through the book as a leader in the civil rights struggle, not just as a baseball hero.

The style of this book is fairly good. Events told in a fictionalized third person form alternate with Jackie's own first-person accounts.

AVERAGE—GOOD

Jackie Robinson of the Brooklyn Dodgers by Milton J. Shapiro is considerably shorter than the Rowan biography and concentrates more on his life in baseball. It starts with an interesting story about Branch Rickey's desire to integrate baseball. Compared with the Rowan biography, this book is lacking in depth and supportive detail. However, it is short, moves rapidly, and might be more appealing to adolescents.

SLOW-AVERAGE—GOOD

Gene Schoor's *Jackie Robinson* is short and is not difficult. The other two books agree on details, but this one offers a slightly different perspective on some events and a completely different story on others. On a whole, it tends to leave out or gloss over anything that seems unfavorable to Jackie Robinson. It has short chapters with rather vivid scenes but little depth of character development.

SLOW—GOOD

BILL RUSSELL

Bill Russell, the 6'10" center for the Boston Celtics, was one of the first of the giant basketball stars. As a boy he was frustrated and unsuccessful in either school or sports. Later, as a basketball star, he knew the excitement of success, but the loneliness of fame.

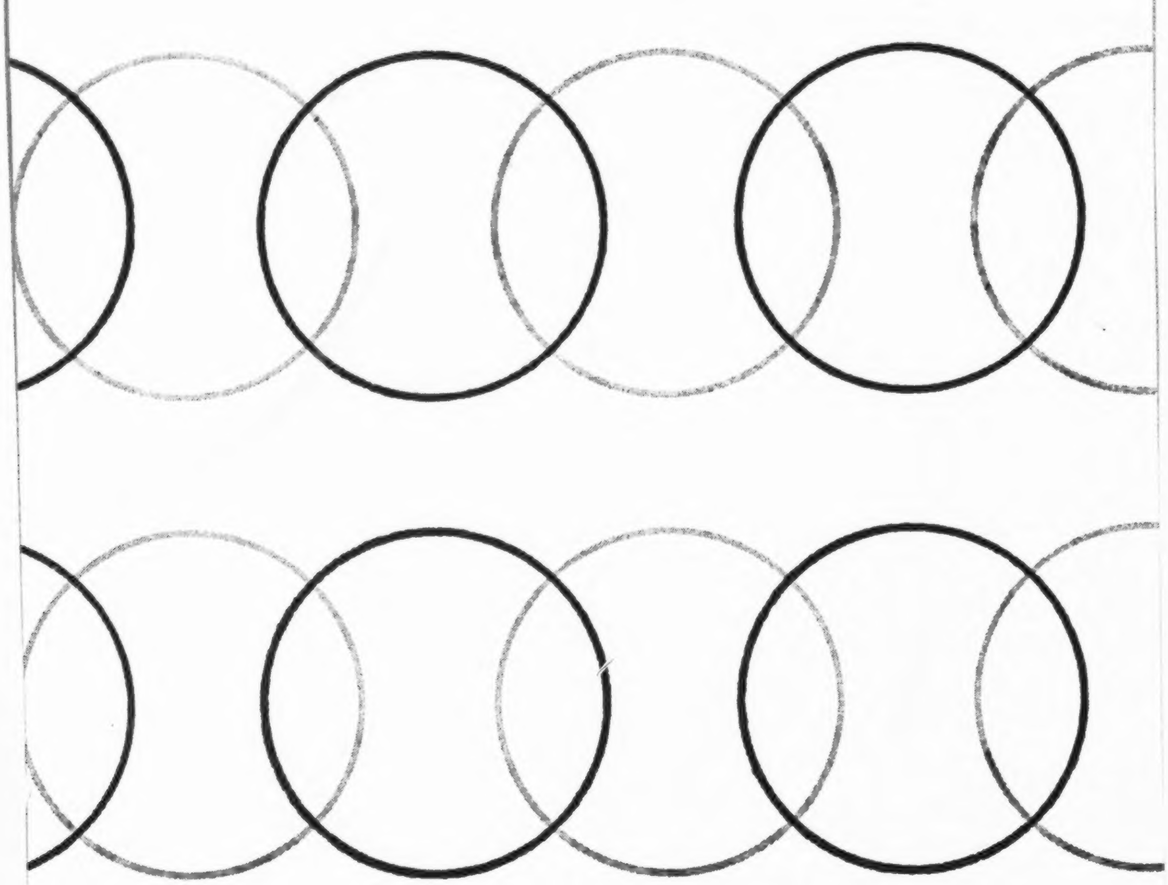
His autobiography *GO UP FOR GLORY,* as told to William McSweeny (New York: Coward-McCann, Inc., 1966), is one of the frankest autobiographies available. The first lines show his philosophy:

> There are no alibis in this book.
> There are no untruths.
> There is, within these pages, only a view of the world as I see it.

Go Up for Glory attempts to be as frank and open as these few lines. The conversational style in which the book is written makes Russell's personality clear. Too much space is spent on his personal complaints, but most material concerns serious problems, such as the proper attitudes toward athletics and segregation. Highly fragmented, skipping from one event to another, the book is not a chronology of his life, but memories of the important moments.

BILL RUSSELL OF THE BOSTON CELTICS, by Al Hirshberg (New York: Julian Messner, 1963, o.p.), resembles in scope the sports page of a newspaper. While it does contain a few interesting sections about life off the basketball floor, it is almost entirely a record of his growth as a basketball player. This book is for sports fans; the autobiography has wider appeal.

CLASSROOM USES OF NEGRO LITERATURE



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THE PRECEDING SECTIONS introduce the literature available by and about Negroes. The following section suggests ways of using Negro literature. Until textbook companies and school boards can be convinced of the value of Negro literature, the teacher will have to be imaginative in finding ways of using it. The following section shows three ways that Negro literature has been included in the English curriculum. The first example shows how the author included Negro literature in a survey course in American literature which is typically taught in the junior or senior years of high school. The second lists suggestions for the inclusion of Negro literature in thematic units that are popular in the freshman and sophomore years of high school. The third approach is a unit of Negro literature used in the ninth grades of the Detroit Public Schools. Finally there is included a suggested plan for building a library of Negro literature.

AN AMERICAN LITERATURE SURVEY

A survey of American literature is a popular course for the eleventh or twelfth grades in most high schools. Our course was based on the Harcourt, Brace textbook, *Adventures in American Literature.* I designed the course to revolve around the theme "The American Dream" and divided it into units representing major intellectual movements in our literary history. Most of the units consisted of selections from the text, additional recorded or dittoed materials, individual reading selections, and a writing assignment.

UNIT I—THE AMERICAN DREAM

The unit on the American dream provides a background for the rest of the year. We frequently refer back to the ideas suggested here and develop most of them in detail later. The unit encourages students to look at the main goals which America has set for herself and to evaluate how well she has lived up to them. Since there is nothing in the textbook on this topic except the introduction, we use mostly Negro authors.

Materials:

"America" by Claude McKay in *The Poetry of the Negro*

"I, Too, Sing America" by Langston Hughes in *The Poetry of the Negro*

"Let American Be America Again" by Langston Hughes in *The Poetry of the Negro*

"Dark Symphony" by Melvin B. Tolson in *The Poetry of the Negro*

"Rendezvous with America" by Melvin B. Tolson in *Rendezvous with America*

CLASS LESSON 1.

"Rendezvous with America" is a moderately difficult poem that catches the spirit of the American dream in a number of images. Since this is the first poem of the year, we study it carefully in class, discussing each section as thoroughly as possible.

CLASS LESSON 2.

"Dark Symphony" follows much the same pattern as "Rendezvous with America" except that it shows the failure of the American dream through the experiences of the Negro. "We again study the poem in detail looking up each of the obscure references. The form of the poem is based on the symphony and we discuss the way each section differs in tone yet is related to the whole poem. Finally we compare the ideas of the two poems showing how "Dark Symphony" affirms the ideals of freedom and equality in its rebellion against oppression.

CLASS LESSON 3.

"Let America Be America Again" is similar to "Dark Symphony" but much simpler. We compare the forms of the two poems showing how Hughes also uses related sections. We also compare the attitudes of the two poets showing that Hughes is less militant and more concerned for all oppressed people.

CLASS LESSON 4.

"America" by Claude McKay and "I, Too, Sing America" contrast the two extremes in the Negro's attitude today. "I, Too, Sing America" represents the Negro who is willing to wait in hopes that eventually he will be a part of America. "America" represents the militant who completely dissociates himself from America and prophesies the end of America and her dream.

UNIT II—THE PURITANS

There is no Negro literature included in the unit on the Puritans, but Ann Petry's *Tituba of Salem Village* is on the outside reading list.

UNIT III—THE REVOLUTIONARIES

The unit on the Revolutionary War develops the ideas of freedom and equality in the writings of the founders of our country and in basic documents like the *Declaration of Independence* and the *Constitution.* I include selections from two Negro writers.

CLASS LESSON 1. Benjamin Banneker's "Letter to Jefferson" in *Early Negro American Writers*

This selection is excellent for studying argumentative writing. We discuss first the type of person Jefferson was and his attitude toward slavery. I show how Banneker used his personal knowledge of Jefferson to direct compliments at him and to present ideas he knew Jefferson would find acceptable. Then we see how Banneker showed that freedom for the Negro is the natural conclusion from Jefferson's ideas about the equality of man. A writing assignment based on this lesson requires the students to write an argument on any topic with a specific person in mind and to use Banneker's techniques to convince him.

CLASS LESSON 2. Phillis Wheatley

To introduce Phillis Wheatley, I use stanza three of "To the Right Honorable William, Earl of Dartmouth, His Majesty's Secretary of State for North America" and "To His Excellency General Washington." These poems are used to further demonstrate the revolutionaries' love of liberty and also as examples of eighteenth century poetry.

The following books are accepted for outside reading:

Your Most Humble Servant: Benjamin Banneker by Shirley Graham

The Story of Phillis Wheatley by Shirley Graham

UNIT–IV ROMANTICISM

I use no Negro literature for this unit.

UNIT V–TRANSCENDENTALISM

This unit concentrates on the ideas of Emerson and Thoreau. After studying their basic philosophy, we study the ways it is influencing people today, especially Martin Luther King.

CLASS LESSON 1. "Civil Disobedience" and Martin Luther King's "Letter from a Birmingham Jail"

In this lesson I attempt to show how Thoreau derived the idea of civil disobedience from transcendentalist principles and how Martin Luther King developed a plan of action from Thoreau's ideas. I also point out the differences between the ideas of the two men.

UNIT VI–THE WEST AND FOLK LITERATURE

This unit defines the distinctive characteristics of Western and folk literature and demonstrates the Western ideals of adventure and physical strength.

CLASS LESSON 1. Paul Laurence Dunbar's poetry

First we analyze Dunbar's dialect poetry to find all the ways it is different from his nondialect poetry. Then we explore the effectiveness of dialect poetry and judge it by some of the literary criteria we have developed. We analyze "Little Brown Baby" in detail and then read "Scamp" and "Wadin' in the Creek" for fun. We study "Puttin the Baby Away" for serious uses of folk and dialect poetry.

We then compare Dunbar's nondialect poetry, judging it by literary criteria and overall interest.

CLASS LESSON 2. Paul Laurence Dunbar's short stories

I read aloud one of Dunbar's folk stories, such as "The Fruitful Sleeping of the Rev. Elisha Edwards," "Jimsella," or "The Deliberation of Mr. Dunkin." Then we discuss the value of such stories and the possible dangers in stereotype. We compare it with modern folk caricatures like "Lil' Abner," "Snuffy Smith," and "The Real McCoys."

CLASS LESSON 3. The Western Hero

After discussing the qualities of Western heroes like John Colter and Kit Carson and folk heroes like Paul Bunyan and Pecos Bill, I play a recording of the John Henry legend. We discuss the traits that all of these men have in common—courage, physical strength, and a will to win. Then we discuss what made these traits so important to Westerners.

UNIT VII—NATURALISM

CLASS LESSON 1. The Roots of Naturalism

This lesson shows the social conditions that helped to inspire the naturalistic movement. W. E. B. DuBois' "A Litany at Atlanta" is used as one example, for it shows how continued persecution drowns hope and faith and creates a fatalistic world-view.

CLASS LESSON 2. "The Man Who Saw the Flood" by Richard Wright in *Eight Men*

After reading Hamlin Garland's "Under the Lion's Paw," I read to the class a similar story, "The Man Who Saw the Flood." Both stories show how nature and cruel men conspire to destroy a person.

Individual Assignments: After studying naturalistic selections in the textbook and developing characteristics of naturalism, students are assigned to read a naturalistic book or a modern book with naturalistic elements. Then they write a paper discussing how the main character is controlled by his fate or environment. Among the books on the reading list are *Native Son* by Richard Wright, *Blood on the Forge* by William Attaway, *Walking on Borrowed Land* by William Owens, *The Street* by Ann Petry, *Beetlecreek* by William Demby and *Porgy* by DuBose Heyward.

UNIT VIII—THE SHORT STORY

The unit on the modern short story concerns the use of literary techniques and also introduces significant modern authors.

After presenting the students with some background on Hughes and reviewing his poetry that we studied, I read one of his short stories such as "Thank You, Ma'am" or "On the Road." We discuss the characteristics of his writing, especially the folk qualities, the irony and the sympathy for people. I then introduce Jesse B. Simple and play selections from the Simple stories on a record. We discuss how Simple demonstrates Hughes' ideas and how the Simple stories are different from ordinary short stories. Other works by Hughes are suggested for further reading.

UNIT IX–POETRY

The poetry is arranged into thematic units and includes poems by Negro authors and poems from the textbook.

Materials:

"Frankie and Johnny"	
Gwendolyn Brooks	"We Real Cool," "For Clarice," and "Jack" all from *The Bean Eaters*
Countee Cullen	"I Have a Rendezvous with Life" in *The Poetry of the Negro*
Langston Hughes	"Suicide's Note," "Fantasy in Purple," "Mother to Son" in *The Poetry of the Negro*
Angelina Weld Grimke	"Grass Fingers" and "Your Hands" in *The Poetry of the Negro*
Waring Cuney	"A Triviality" in *The Poetry of the Negro*
Claude McKay	"If We Must Die" in *The Poetry of the Negro*
James Weldon Johnson	"The Glory of the Day" and "The Crucifixion" in *The Poetry of the Negro* and *God's Trombones*
Jessie Fauset	"La Vie, C'Est La Vie"

THEME I. People

People are a favorite topic of writers, either in story or picture. We first read a narrative folk story, "Frankie and Johnny." Next we read a more sophisticated narrative, "Death of a Hired Man" by Robert Frost, and compare the techniques and effects of the two poems.

Next we read a group of poems that suggest a story in a character sketch: Masters' "Lucinda Matlock" and "Mrs. B. Reece," and Hughes' "Mother to Son." Next we read Brooks' "We Real Cool" and discuss how she has painted a picture of a group of people.

THEME II. Romance and Lost Love

A favorite topic of poets and teenagers is the loss of love. "For Clarice" describes how the sentimentalized love of television and young teenagers can be disillusioning. Since "For Clarice" uses seasonal imagery to show the loss of love, we also consider Edna St. Vincent Millay's "The Spring and the Fall" to examine other ways seasonal imagery can be used. "La Vie, C'Est La Vie" and "A Triviality" both show irony in the loss of love, but one is humorous and the other tragic. We read the simpler poems, "The Glory of the Day" and "Your Hands," with little comment.

THEME III. Death and Courage

For this theme we discuss pairs of poems. The first pair is Seeger's "I Have a Rendezvous with Death" and Cullen's "I Have a Rendezvous with Life." We discuss the technique of parody and the differences in the ideas of the two poems.

"The Leaden-Eyed" by Vachel Lindsay and "If We Must Die" by Claude McKay appear quite different, but a comparison of the two lines, "Not that they died, but that they died like sheep" and "If we must die, let it not be like hogs," begins to show the similarity. Both poems encourage men to fight for rights and not to give in to poverty and a living death.

Both Sandburg and Grimke use grass to discuss death in "Grass" and "Grass Fingers." We discuss the different ways they use the same symbol.

To close this theme we read aloud "Suicide Note" and "Fantasy in Purple."

Another series of lessons on poetry concentrates on major poets and their techniques. I use James Weldon Johnson.

I time this lesson to come just before Easter and have a class do a choral reading of "The Crucifixion" from *God's Trombones.* We discuss the techniques Johnson uses to build emotion and create poetic effects. I then have individual students do prepared oral interpretations of other poems from *God's Trombones.*

3

NEGRO LITERATURE IN THEMATIC UNITS

The unit plan or the thematic approach to literature has recently become quite popular with English teachers. The thematic unit usually studies a theme which is relevant to members of the class. One or more selections are read by the class together and then a number of other selections which illuminate different aspects of the theme are read by individuals and small groups with guidance from the teacher. The thematic unit is an ideal place to incorporate books about Negroes because the teacher is not faced with the problem of obtaining thirty copies of the book, and the books can fit naturally without making an issue of teaching Negro literature. In my sophomore class I used this approach several times and found it quite successful. I have included an outline of several of the successful units I used and suggestions for Negro literature to be included in other popular themes.

UNIT I–
WHO DOES YOUR THINKING FOR YOU?

This unit was developed around a unit of short stories in the Harcourt, Brace anthology, *Adventures in Living*. The unit included such stories as "The Lottery," "The New Kid," "That Greek Dog," and "Bad Influence." After discussing the ways people allow their thinking to be distorted as illustrated in the stories, we did some exercises on reasoning and clear thinking in our language book. Next we had small group discussions using some of the following books.

South Town by Lorenz Graham—about race prejudice in the South.

A Raisin in the Sun by Lorraine Hansberry—discusses housing and job discrimination in the North.

Julie's Heritage by Catherine Marshall—about a Negro girl in a white school.

The Lilies of the Field by William Barrett—shows discrimination overcome by a Negro and some German nuns.

All American by John Tunis—shows how a football hero overcomes prejudice.

UNIT II—LOYALTIES

A unit on loyalties helps students to recognize the people they should be loyal to and to resolve conflicting loyalties. The Negro, as well as members of other minority groups, often faces a culture conflict. He may have trouble deciding whether his primary loyalty is owed to his racial group or to his country. All students are faced with conflicts between the ideas of their families and social or religious groups and the ideas of their peer groups. There are a number of poems that deal with this topic. The best of these from simplest to most difficult are Langston Hughes' "I Have Known Rivers," Arna Bontemps' "The Negro Speaks of Rivers," Countee Cullen's "Heritage," Margaret Walker's "For My People," Melvin B. Tolson's "Dark Symphony," and Countee Cullen's "The Black Christ."

There are also a number of novels dealing with this conflict. In rough order of difficulty they are:

Anchor Man by Jesse Jackson
North Town by Lorenz Graham
Shuttered Windows by Florence Crannell Means
Julie's Heritage by Catherine Marshall
Quicksand and *Passing* by Nella Larson
The Autobiography of an Ex-Coloured Man by James Weldon Johnson
Their Eyes Were Watching God by Zora Neale Hurston
A Different Drummer by William Melvin Kelley
Invisible Man by Ralph Ellison

UNIT III—KNOW THYSELF

A unit on self-understanding can take several forms depending on the ability of the students. Lower ability students might only be able to see obvious choices like career or mate. More advanced students can see how a person develops his character, and personality, and a philosophy of life.

BOOKS OF MODERATE DIFFICULTY

Yes, I Can by Sammy Davis, Jr.
Tolliver by Florence Crannell Means
Victory over Myself by Floyd Patterson

Durango Street by Frank Bonham
The Seeking by Will Thomas

ADVANCED BOOKS

Take a Giant Step by Louis Peterson
A Touch of Innocence by Katherine Dunham
Black Boy by Richard Wright
Jazz Country by Nat Hentoff
Lena by Lena Horne

VERY ADVANCED BOOKS

(Teacher should read before assigning.)

Go Tell It on the Mountain by James Baldwin
The Autobiography of Malcolm X by Malcolm X
A Drop of Patience by William Melvin Kelley
Invisible Man by Ralph Ellison
Manchild in the Promised Land by Claude Brown
Brown Girl, Brownstones by Paule Marshall
Sissie by John A. Williams

UNIT IV—CIVIL RIGHTS

With all the current emphasis on the civil rights movement, it might be worthwhile to have a whole unit on the race problem. The unit could focus on several levels. For younger students it could emphasize people living together in harmony. Older students could discuss the problems of integration or the various areas of the civil rights movement. Advanced students could take some of the more shocking books that show the tragedy of prejudice.

HARMONIOUS HUMAN RELATIONS

The Seeking by Will Thomas
The Lilies of the Field by William Barrett
Abel's Daughter by Rachel Maddux
Whispering Willow by Elizabeth Hamilton Friermood
A Patch of Blue by Elizabeth Kata

PROBLEMS OF INTEGRATION

Willow Hill by Phyllis A. Whitney
Lions in the Way by Bella Rodman

The Barred Road by Adele DeLeeuw
Classmates by Request by Hila Colman
Baseball Has Done It by Jackie Robinson
Wait Till Next Year by Carl Rowan

TRAGEDY OF PREJUDICE

Nigger by Dick Gregory
Black Like Me by John Howard Griffin
Road without Turning by James H. Robinson
Blues for Mr. Charlie by James Baldwin
Native Son and *Black Boy* by Richard Wright
Beetlecreek by William Demby

UNIT V—CAREERS

Our unit on careers includes a study of job opportunities, lessons on applying for a job, and literature about people in various jobs. Among the career books available about Negroes are the following:

MEDICINE:
Doctor Dan: Pioneer in American Surgery by Helen Buckler
A Cap for Mary Ellis by Hope Newell
Mary Ellis, Student Nurse by Hope Newell

TEACHING:
To Sir, With Love by E. R. Braithwaite
Echo in My Soul by Septima Poinsette Clark

DIPLOMACY:
Ralph J. Bunche: Fighter for Peace by J. Alvin Kugelmass

MINISTRY:
Howard Thurman: Portrait of a Practical Dreamer by Elizabeth Yates
Road without Turning by James H. Robinson

MUSIC:
My Lord, What a Morning by Marian Anderson
A Drop of Patience by William Melvin Kelley
Julie's Heritage by Catherine Marshall

DANCING:

Yes, I Can by Sammy Davis, Jr.
Hold Fast to Your Dreams by Catherine Blanton

SPORTS:

Maybe I'll Pitch Forever by LeRoy (Satchel) Paige
The Cassius Clay Story by George Sullivan
I Always Wanted to Be Somebody by Althea Gibson
Wait Till Next Year by Carl Rowan

DETROIT NEGRO LITERATURE SUPPLEMENT: GRADE 9

The following is a guide designed for teachers in the Detroit Public Schools by the Division for Improvement of Instruction, Department of Language Education. It was published by the Board of Education in 1966 and is used with permission. This supplement is included in this book especially for the junior high school teachers concerned. Detroit has also made available a supplement for Grade 11.

INTRODUCTION

At this period in the history of the United States when billions of dollars are being appropriated by the federal government to provide equal educational and employment opportunities for every individual, the role of educators assumes broadened dimensions. Curricula must be revised and adjusted to meet individual needs. Greater effort must be exerted to help youth develop into happy, useful, stable adults equipped to participate successfully in modern society.

The new role requires broad knowledge and application. Youth must be trained to meet the employment requirements of the technological age. Kaleidoscopic changes have been effected in the field of employment; jobs requiring little skill are rapidly disappearing. Youth without special skills or training find survival in the adult world difficult.

Young people are threatened by the population explosion. Unable to compete successfully with the growing ranks of job seekers, they find themselves among the unemployed in mushrooming numbers.

The individual's feeling of dignity and worth has been greatly damaged by depersonalization, a by-product of technology and the population explosion. This has had a particularly devastating impact on Negroes. Like minority-group members everywhere and in every era, Negroes commonly suffer from negative self-concepts and low aspiration levels (although increasing numbers are overcoming these psychic handicaps).

One of the important dimensions, then, of education's role in helping Negroes to a more positive image of themselves is that of using literature as a means to this end. This unit, however, is not designed as a guide for taking Negro literature out of its dynamic context. It should be used in conjunction with other materials. By so doing, we will stress the importance of *all* people in the shaping of self-concepts.

Again, since the prevailing stereotype of "the Negro" is composed of the unfortunate aspects of his life as a slave in America, a logical corrective beginning would seem to be a program designed to popularize information regarding his contribution to American culture, both past and present, and to establish identity with the once great civilizations of Africa, source of his origin. Indeed, Negro predates by thousands of years the arrival of Negroes as slaves in America.

This unit on Negro literature can have definite value for pupils of all ethnic groups. Individuals tend to have greater self-appreciation when they are able to respect others. Members of minorities reflect more dignity and assurance as their self-image becomes more positive.

Ignorance of the story of their struggles and aspirations, their frustrations and dreams is, indeed, ignorance of basic facts about our land and its people. One who has never learned of their lives and works has never learned the whole of the American story.

OBJECTIVES FOR THE UNIT

General

1. To introduce students to Negro contributions to literature.

2. To help students of all races to a better understanding of themselves and of each other.
3. To show that the concerns of American Negroes exhibit the universality of human experience at a special American viewpoint.
4. To explore the uniqueness of Negro experience as related to Negro literary creations.
5. To relate the contents of this unit to contemporary life.

Language Skills

1. To continue growth in vocabulary.
2. To guide youngsters into a skillful use of library facilities and other reference materials.
3. To achieve continued improvement in reading, writing, speaking, and listening.
4. To emphasize critical thinking and expository writing.

Background Reading for the Teacher

To better understand the difficulties of the Negro in American society, it is necessary for the teacher to have a background that reaches beyond the unit. For this purpose a short list of selected titles is included, of which the single most comprehensive reference is the one by Richard Wade, *The Negro in American Life.* This title, therefore, is especially recommended to the teacher with limited time who yet feels the need of a quick overview.

Baldwin, James.	*The Fire Next Time*
Ellison, Ralph.	*Shadow and Act*
King, Martin Luther, Jr.	*Strength to Love*
Lomax, Louis.	*The Negro Revolt*
Silberman, Charles.	*Crisis in Black and White*
Wade, Richard.	*The Negro in American Life*

RECOMMENDED PROCEDURES FOR THE UNIT

Useful Themes

It is recommended that teachers use one of the many themes already found in current ninth grade anthologies. Several of these are suitable channels through which the class could enter the unit on Negro Literature or move from it into the text. Especially suggestive are the following:

From *Adventures for Today*
- Conflict
- Understanding People
- Growing Up
- Drawn from Life

From *Values in Literature*
- Insights
- People
- Comments on Life
- Poems of Mood

Books for the Students

Basic:
- *The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave*—by himself.

Novels: (Choose one)
- For average or good readers:
- *The Lilies of the Field*, William Barrett
- For slower readers:
- *Mary Jane*, Dorothy Sterling

Enrichment

It is further recommended that teachers seize every opportunity to enrich the unit. Time, expense, and difficulties with copyright laws will not permit the inclusion of poems, essays, or articles in the guide. However, the teacher is urged to use films, filmstrips, and commercial records whenever possible. Moreover, the teacher is reminded of the value of good reading. Teachers can read poems or prose excerpts, or play tapes of their own interpretations. Occasionally, other teachers or a few of the better students can add different voices. Creative variation will add much to the unit.

OUTLINE

(Four or Five Weeks)

1st and 2nd Weeks: *The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*

First day: Introduce Unit. Explain and outline. Motivate through a theme already used or play the first 3-7 minutes of the record "The Frederick Douglass Years, 1817-1895." (Catalogue #107502)

Second day: Explain the sentimental style of nineteenth century prose. Pass out books. Read and discuss the Preface.

From third to tenth day: Complete the reading alternating discussion, written work, oral reading, and silent reading. Use the "Study Guide" as desired. Culminate on the tenth or eleventh day with the filmstrip and record "The Frederick Douglass Years, 1817-1895." (Requires approximately 52 minutes)

3rd Week: Introduce the novel of choice. Plan to complete it in five to seven days.

4th or 5th Week: Enrichment period. Make maximum use of themes selected earlier. Bring in copies of poems suitable to the themes. (See p. 134) Play records and tapes.

GENERAL DISCUSSION GUIDE

The following guide might be used with the Douglass autobiography as well as with the books to be selected for individual reading during the unit.

1. What specific contributions of the Negro to the American culture are shown in this book? (*e.g.* music, literature, art, dance.)
2. How does the Negro see himself in this book? What circumstances in the book contribute to this attitude? Explain.
3. What problems of the Negro, as discussed in this book, are common to all Americans? What problems, to all humans?
4. State the main character's most outstanding personality trait, such as courage, common sense, ambition, sense of humor, inventiveness, honor, endurance, etc. Cite evidence from the book to support your statement.
5. Did the main character eventually realize his goal? To what do you attribute his success or failure?
6. It has been said that "We have no way of judging the future but by the past." Assuming that the statement is true, what in

this book suggests the plight of the American Negro? What do *you* think the future holds for the Negro in America?

STUDY GUIDE

Unit on *The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*

Note: Make maximum use of the themes in the anthology chosen for class use (See page 134).

Preface

1. Why do you suppose William Lloyd Garrison was selected to write the preface to Frederick Douglass' autobiography?
2. What was the purpose of Wendell Phillips' letter to Frederick Douglass?

Chapters

1. What was Frederick Douglass' relationship with his parents and other relatives? Explain.
2. What might have been your feelings toward your parents if you had been in his place?
3. List some of the activities on the plantation and discuss their significance. Why, for example, were parents separated from their children?
4. What portraits does Douglass paint of the slave masters? In your own words describe a slave's day on a plantation, tracing his activities from early morning to late night.
5. Douglass points out in his narrative that the slaves "seemed to think that the greatness of their masters was transferable to themselves." Explain why *you* think they felt this way.
6. Do you feel that many of the actions of the slaves in relation to what they thought or did not think of their masters can be attributed to such basic human needs as (a) the need for recognition, (b) the need for love, etc.?
7. What did Douglass think about the religious life of the slave masters? What was his chief complaint? Explain why you agree or do not agree with Douglass.
8. Describe the place of religion in the life of the slave. Cite instances where religion might have played a very important role in sustaining Frederick Douglass.

9. What effect did Douglass' removal from the plantation have upon him? How did it change the course of his life? How did it affect his thinking?
10. After Douglass gained freedom, what became of his interests, his activities, and his main purpose?
11. What benefits, if any, have you received from reading this book? Offer specific examples of what you consider the outstanding features of this book.
12. Would you recommend this book to others to read? What kinds of persons would profit most from reading this book? Why?

Suggested themes to correlate with *Adventures for Today*

Unit One: Conflict
Unit Two: Understanding People
Unit Three: Teamwork
Unit Six: Drawn from Life

Suggested themes to correlate with *Values in Literature*

Part One: Insights
People
The World
Part Two: Nonfiction
(Biography Section)

Suggested topics for additional themes

1. Time Brings Changes
2. The Meaning of "All Men Are Created Equal"
3. This, I Believe
4. Why I Prefer Living in a Democracy

Unit on *The Lilies of the Field*

Objectives

1. To understand the uniqueness of individuals.
2. To analyze the make-up of fictional characters and real people.
3. To explore the concepts of freedom, love, and faith.

Note: The study of this novel can be correlated with one of several themes in the regular anthology for the grade.

Suggestions for Discussion before Reading

Teachers should arouse interest in reading the novel with pertinent discussion questions. Representative questions are included below. Use them as appropriate for the class.

1. What do words like love, brotherhood, freedom, and faith mean to you?
2. Under what circumstances would you accept a job and work without pay?
3. On what basis do you accept or judge people?

Suggestions for Reading the Novel

This novel should be read rather quickly (3-5 days). The first day should be chiefly motivation. The second should open with a very brief tie-in discussion followed by extended reading. Students should complete the novel (reading some of it at home) by the fourth or fifth day at the latest. On the fourth or fifth day, portions of the book can be read dramatically for enjoyment. Teachers will find it especially rewarding to select teams of better readers to interpret selected scenes for the class. Also recommended are soliloquies or pantomimes based on particular sections.

Suggestions for Discussion after Reading

The following questions are suggested to initiate discussion after the novel has been read. Teachers may use teacher option in selecting questions to be used.

1. Summarize Homer's concept of freedom. What is your idea of freedom?
2. Gomez defines faith as "a word for what is unreasonable." Explain whether you agree or disagree. What is your definition of faith?
3. To what extent are faith, love, freedom important to the novel as a whole and to Homer and Mother Maria Marthe in particular?
4. Arthur Knight in *Saturday Review* (September 7, 1963) has written that *The Lilies of the Field* "is the delineation of a central character whom one admires as a human being, not sympathized with as a Negro." Analyze the statement carefully and give your reaction to it. Use details to support your comments.
5. To bring Homer Smith into sharper focus, prepare a detailed and vivid study of his character. Make use of the five senses in your study.

6. Write a character study of yourself. In what ways are you similar to and different from Homer?
7. Explain this statement about Homer: "He was free like the lilies of the field."
8. One writer has referred to *The Lilies of the Field* as a "novel which is incidentally color blind." Explain the evaluation in detail. Using supporting reasons, do you agree or disagree with the writer's judgment of the novel?
9. Mother Maria Marthe says of Homer, "He was not of our faith, nor of our skin . . . but he was a man of greatness, of an utter devotion." Tell why you agree or disagree with her evaluation of Homer.
10. Explain whether or not Homer is recognized and accepted simply as a man or as a *Negro* man.
11. In what way, if any, is it important to the novel that Homer is a Negro?
12. What does the chapel symbolize for Homer? In what way do you identify with the symbol?

Suggestions for Other Themes

Personal Accomplishments
Love of Freedom

Unit on *Mary Jane*

Objectives

1. To understand the uniqueness of individuals.
2. To analyze the make-up of fictional characters and real people.
3. To evaluate the effects of hatred and prejudice.

Note: The study of this novel can also be correlated with one of the themes in the regular anthology for the ninth grade. See the "Suggestions for Reading the Novel" under the Unit on *The Lilies of the Field.*

Suggestions for Discussion before Reading

The teacher can arouse interest in reading this novel by initiating a discussion of the impact of hatred and prejudice on a girl who is one of the first Negroes to attend a newly integrated junior high school.

Here are a few questions to guide discussion:

1. What do words like prejudice and hatred mean to you?

2. Under what circumstances would you attend a class with people who are prejudiced against you?
3. Why would a Negro enter such a situation?

Study Questions for Chapters 1-5—after Reading

1. What is the situation in which Mary Jane is involved? Whose decision was responsible for the situation? Is this situation believable in today's world? Explain.
2. At the beginning of the story, Mary Jane and Grampa do not agree about what life at Wilson Junior High will be like. As you read, decide whose ideas were most nearly right.
3. Which part of the story of Red Anne does Mary Jane like? What is the significance of Grampa telling this story? Is Grampa's comment about "education always being important in our family" meaningful? Why?
4. Do you think that it was just idle conversation when Grampa talked with Mary Jane about Wilson? If not, why would Grampa be the one to talk with her about it? Does the author have any specific purpose here that you can see?
5. Discuss the ways in which Mary Jane's mother and father try to prepare her for entering Wilson.

Chapters 7-22

6. Describe Mary Jane's first day at Wilson from the time she leaves home until she returns. Who had tried to prepare her for the happenings of the day? Was she prepared?
7. Compare the phone calls Mary Jane and the family got from Grampa and others. Could the "other kind" of phone call really happen in America?
8. Describe some of the unpleasant incidents for Mary Jane at Wilson. Describe some of the more pleasant ones.
9. Why is Fred more readily accepted than Mary Jane? Is this typical?
10. In what ways does Mary Jane begin to fight back? Are you glad when she does?
11. Describe the relationship between Sally and Mary Jane. What is the significance of the hurt squirrel to the story?
12. In what ways do some of Mary Jane's teachers try to help her?

13. Describe the incident with the music teacher. Is this type of generalization about people usual? We call this kind of thinking "making stereotypes." What other kinds can you think of? Are we all sometimes guilty of this? Discuss.
14. All of the students at Wilson do not dislike Mary Jane and Fred. Why, then, are they not more friendly? What would you have done in a similar situation?
15. What important decision does the Science Club make? What is its significance to the story?
16. Briefly name those in the book who show courage in the face of conflict. In what way(s)?
17. In what ways are the mothers of Mary Jane and Sally alike?
18. In what ways are you like or unlike Mary Jane or Fred? How are their actions and reactions typical of children of their age?
19. Write a brief paragraph telling what Mary Jane learned from her experience.
20. Mary Jane and Fred are "pioneers" at Wilson. Are pioneers needed in the world? Discuss some pioneers in other phases of life and in what ways they have made life easier and/or better for you and me.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER ENRICHMENT

RECOMMENDED POEMS

Established themes can be used to enhance the unit and motivate the reading of poetry. For example, the teacher might review or remind the class of the conflict Frederick Douglass faced in trying to get work as a caulker in Baltimore. Then a good reader could read Countee Cullen's "Incident."

Again, the class could explore the themes of "Growing Up" or "Drawn from Life" as applied to the early death of Frederick's mother. Then someone could read "My Mother" by Claude McKay or "Mother to Son" by Langston Hughes. Other poems on the theme of "Growing Up" are "We Real Cool" by Gwendolyn Brooks and "For a Child" by Naomi Madgett.

Many poems show the Negro's growing pride in himself and some reflect his determination to achieve a new image. No unit on Negro literature should be concluded without reading or listening to a record of a few of these. Several additional titles, suitable for use in the ninth grade, are included.

Poems	*Author*
"Nocturne"	Naomi Madgett
"Alabama Centennial"	Naomi Madgett

—See *Star by Star*

Poems from the Eleventh Grade Anthology

Several poems found in the eleventh grade anthology are more suitable for the ninth grade. They are listed below:

"Poem"	Helene Johnson
"To Satch"	Samuel Allen
"The New Negro"	James McCall
"If We Must Die"	Claude McKay
"The Negro Speaks of Rivers"	Langston Hughes

—See *American Negro Poetry*

SHORT LIST OF POETRY ANTHOLOGIES

When the teacher and the class wish to browse and select other poems, suitable titles may be located by skimming through the complete poems of a selected poet. For quick and easy reference, however, the teacher might prefer the short list of poetry anthologies which follows:

Bontemps, Arna. *American Negro Poetry.*
Selected poems are for ninth grade.

Bontemps, Arna. *Golden Slippers: An Anthology of Negro Poetry for Young Readers.*
Includes religious, humorous, lyrical and narrative poems.

Hill, Herbert, editor. *Soon, One Morning: New Writings by American Negroes, 1940-1962.*
Includes poetry and prose.

Hughes, Langston, editor. *New Negro Poets: U. S. A.*
Somewhat mature for junior high school.

Hughes, Langston, and Arna Bontemps, editors. *The Poetry of the Negro, 1746-1949.*
An historical survey of American Negro poets and poets from the Caribbean.

SUGGESTED READINGS IN PROSE

As has been noted, many themes used to coordinate the unit can also be used to motivate further reading. For instance, the themes "Conflict" and "Drawn from Life" create an excellent climate into which to introduce "Rockpile" by James Baldwin, "After You, My Dear Alphonse" by Shirley Jackson, or "A Visit to Grandmother" by William M. Kelley. The teacher could read one of these to the class, or recommend them to good readers for individual enjoyment.

The interesting folk humor of the Negro should—or could—be another path into enjoyment and broader understanding. Unfortunately the best materials do not come properly edited for junior high school use. It is, therefore, recommended that the teacher read suitable excerpts to the class, or use records. An essay that might prove especially rewarding is the one in which Simple speaks his mind on "Landladies" in *The Best of Simple* by Langston Hughes. This selection is also found on a Folkways Record, read by Langston Hughes. An enterprising teacher could manage by taping a good interpretation and playing it back to the class. Additional material could be excerpted from various books and records by and about Negro comedians such as Dick Gregory.

Short Stories

"Rockpile"	James Baldwin —in *Going to Meet the Man.*
"After You, My Dear Alphonse"	Shirley Jackson —in *Scope,* IV (Feb. 11, 1966). Published by Scholastic Magazines.
"A Visit to Grandmother"	William M. Kelley —in *Short Stories* II, Literary Heritage Series. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1962.

Essays, articles and additional short stories are listed in the separate bibliography for this unit.

Folklore

Courlander, Harold. *Terrapin's Pot of Sense.*
New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, Inc., 1957.

Hughes, Langston, and Arna Bontemps. *The Book of Negro Folklore.*
New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1958.

Recommended Novels

Allen, Merritt P. *Battle Lanterns.**
New York: David McKay Co., Inc., 1949.
Arundel, Jocelyn. *Simba of the White Mane.**
New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1958.
Graham, Lorenz. *South Town.**
Chicago: Follett Publishing Company, 1960.
Kelley, William M. *A Different Drummer.*
New York: Doubleday and Co., Inc., 1957
Lee, Harper. *To Kill a Mockingbird.*
Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1960.
Parks, Gordon. *The Learning Tree.*
New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1963.
Shotwell, Louisa R. *Roosevelt Grady.**
Cleveland, Ohio: The World Publishing Company, 1963.

Audiovisual Materials

FILMS

Title	Length	Grades
Americans All	16 min.	7-9
What about Prejudice	11 min.	7-12
The World We Want to Live In	11 min.	4-12

FILMSTRIPS

Benjamin Banneker	7-12
The Frederick Douglass Years, 1817-1895 (With synchronized record)	
Frederick Douglass Part I	4-9
Harriet Tubman Part II	4-9

RECORDS

NCTE
508 South Sixth Street
Champaign, Illinois 61820

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* Relatively easy to read.

81100	Songs of the American Negro Slaves —12"—sung by Michael LaRue ($5.79)
80904	Singers in the Dusk—Poems by Negro poets read by Charles Lampkin ($5.95)

* * * * * * * * *

Folkways/Scholastic Records
50 West 44th Street
New York, New York 10036

FL 9789	Best of Simple—Langston Hughes Read by Melvin Stewart
FL 9790	Langston Hughes, Sterling Brown Read Their Poetry. Hughes also reads from *Simple Speaks His Mind*
FL 9791	Anthology of Negro Poets —read by Arna Bontemps
FL 9792	Anthology of Negro Poets —read by Arna Bontemps
	Special Audiovisual Loan
107502	The Frederick Douglass Years, 1817-1895 (This number does *not* include the filmstrip)

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SUGGESTED LIBRARY COLLECTION

Many libraries have almost no Negro literature, and few libraries have enough money to remedy this problem immediately. The twenty books listed below would give a good sampling of Negro literature. These books were selected for their appeal to adolescents as well as their quality. They provide as wide a range as possible of topics and reading levels.

ANTHOLOGIES	Hughes and Bontemps: *The Poetry of the Negro*
	Hughes: *The Best Short Stories by Negro Writers*
BIOGRAPHY	Graham: *Your Most Humble Servant, Benjamin Banneker*
	Douglass: *The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave*
	Malcolm X: *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*
	Sterling, Dorothy: *Freedom Train*
	Washington: *Up from Slavery*
MAJOR WRITERS	Hughes: *The Best of Simple*
	Baldwin: *Nobody Knows My Name*
	Johnson: *God's Trombones*
	Dunbar: *The Complete Poems of Paul Laurence Dunbar*
	Kelly: *Dancers on the Shore*

MODERN AND JUNIOR NOVELS AND BOOKS

Hansberry: *A Raisin in the Sun*
Barrett: *The Lilies of the Field*
Graham: *South Town*
Marshall: *Julie's Heritage*
Bonham: *Durango Street*
Rodman: *Lions in the Way*
Means: *Tolliver*
Griffin: *Black Like Me*

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Campanella, Roy. *It's Good to Be Alive.* Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1959.

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